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Jansenism as literature : a study into the influence of Augustinian theology on seventeenth-century French literature

Jansenism as Literature: A Study into the Influence of Augustinian Theology on Seventeenth-Century French Literature

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Abstract

This study investigates the effects of Jansenist theology on seventeenth-century French literature. After an initial explanation of the history of the Jansenist movement and its specific beliefs, there then follows a study into some of the works produced by members of this group. These citations have also been used in order to trace the development of the movement over the seventeenth century. For the purpose of this research, the term Jansenism has been taken to refer to the movement in the seventeenth century and has not been extended into the following century.

Once this description has been given, the following four chapters each deal with an individual author and their connection to the Jansenist movement. Their principle works are then studied in order to ascertain the level of influence exerted by this form of religious piety on their literary output.

Chapter Two deals with Pascal and concentrates on his *Lettres Provinciales* and *Pensées*. Chapter Three studies La Rochefoucauld's *Maximes*, which are a prime example of the pessimistic view of mankind that was so prevalent during this century. Chapter Four looks into two of Madame de Lafayette's novels, *La Princesse de Clèves* and *La Comtesse de Tende*. Chapter Five then studies Racine, a figure whose personal connections with the Jansenist movement, and subsequent estrangement from it, have been well studied.

Finally the Conclusion draws together the findings from these chapters and demonstrates how the movement's own development led to changes in how Jansenist doctrine affected the literature of the seventeenth century.

SIGNED: Clare Jennings DATE: 30th May 2007

To my mum, dad and Gareth

'For in much wisdom *is* much grief: and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow', Ecclesiastes 1:18

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A big thanks should go to Natalie Coles, and her friend Stan, who have helped to keep me sane; just remember, нас не догонят! Finally I would like to thank Gareth Martin for his help and love. Without him I would not have begun this research project and I certainly would not have managed to finish it. You are my everything.

Счастье – это сигара которая называется хэмлэт

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Notes

When a work is quoted from frequently, the full bibliographical details are provided in an initial footnote. Subsequent references are then only referred to by page number; this has been done to save repetition.

Individual works will normally be found in the bibliography under the heading that refers to the chapter in which they are cited, unless they are of a more general nature.

INTRODUCTION

The influence of Augustinian thought on both religion and philosophy has been immense throughout the history of ideas. The saint's beliefs also took on a vital role in the French Church; after the Council of Trent the Augustinian tradition "remained strong in the Catholic Church",[1] despite continued fierce religious debate which threatened to weaken religious unity. The publication of Augustine's works in ten volumes by Erasmus in 1529 no doubt aided the dissemination of the saint's beliefs and ideas around Europe. However it was in the seventeenth century that these beliefs came to the fore in France.

The importance of these doctrines is most evident in the religious group which came to be known as the Jansenists. This group has been well studied since its conception,[2] yet it remains difficult to find an authoritative definition of Jansenism itself, a fact that has added to these debates. As Bénichou states, "il n'est pas facile...d'attribuer une signification précise au courant de pensée qu'on nomme...jansénisme".[3] It is not immediately obvious whether the movement should be explained through the *Augustinus*; the five propositions; the numerous theological works produced by its supporters; by the religious practices undertaken at the convent of Port-Royal; by the beliefs of certain personalities, such as Jansenius, Saint-Cyran, Antoine Arnauld, or Nicole. Taveneaux has rightly stated that "il existe donc non pas *un* jansénisme mais *des* jansénismes".[4] The difficulty in producing a precise definition is rendered even greater by the relative lack of study of contemporary documents.[5]

It is interesting that the century which produced some of the most important religious debates of the period has also "been celebrated for its many towering literary figures".[6] The literature which originates from this time is considered as some of the best. It has also been suggested that Jansenism "influenced some of the outstanding literary figures

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[1] Richard Bonney, *The European Dynastic States 1494-1660*, Oxford, 1991, p.9
[2] Perhaps the two best known, and most exhaustive, works are Orcibal's *Les Origines du Jansénisme* and Sainte-Beuve's *Port-Royal*
[3] Paul Bénichou, *Morales du grand siècle*, Paris, c1948, p.77
[4] René Taveneaux, *La vie quotidienne des jansénistes aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles*, Paris, 1973, p.13
[5] Lucien Ceyssens, *Sources relatives aux débuts du jansénisme et de l'antijansénisme, 1640-1643*, Louvain, 1957, p.v
[6] Nicholas Hammond, *Creative Tensions: An Introduction to Seventeenth-Century French Literature*, London, 1977, p.9

of the seventeenth century, including Racine, Pascal...La Rochefoucauld and Madame de Lafayette".[7] The movement, and its connections with the convent of Port-Royal, have also fascinated individual authors over the centuries. In the twentieth century, the novelist Mauriac is said to have portrayed a level of Jansenist belief within his work, whilst Henry de Montherlant produced his own play depicting the events at Port-Royal.

Despite the many studies which have already been made into the Jansenist movement, it remains an important area of research. One reason for this is the fact that it played such a vital role in the development of church doctrine: Biyidi has explained that religious debate occupied "la première place" in seventeenth-century France.[8] This is hardly surprising; during the previous century the country had been ravaged by the Wars of Religion, and the effects of this conflict lasted into the following century. Religious discussions permeated this period of French history, the nature of grace often being at the centre. Many different groups and individuals debated this question and it is considered to be "probablement la clef de la littérature du XVIIe siècle".[9] The rise in importance of Augustinian theology during this period can have only contributed to this.

The aim of this research is to determine the importance of the impact of Jansenism on French literature of the period. In order to do this, it will be necessary to produce a detailed explanation of the different forms which Jansenism took, since the influence of a movement cannot be measured easily unless the true nature of that movement is known. Therefore before any proper study of seventeenth-century French literature is undertaken, a brief explanation of the many facets of Jansenism, and its popularity as a whole, would be helpful.

Some critics consider Jansenism to be of the utmost importance to any study of French history. Doyle describes the movement as "the most persistent problem afflicting the Catholic Church for almost two centuries";[10] Crichton believes that it brought about the "greatest, and most damaging controversy that afflicted the French Church in the

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[7] Peter France (ed), *The New Oxford Companion to Literature in French*, Oxford, 1995, p.409
[8] Odile Biyidi, *Histoire de la littérature française: XVIIe siècle*, Paris, c1988, p.24
[9] Ibid, p.30
[10] William Doyle, *Jansenism and Catholic Resistance to Authority from the Reformation to the French Revolution*, London, 2000, p.1

seventeenth century".[11] This depiction contrasts greatly with the lowly status of the movement at its conception; it came into existence without great fanfare or even too much debate. Jansenism was conceived through the work of two friends: a Dutch theologian, Cornelius Jansenius, and a French scholar, Jean Duvergier de Hauranne, who were both graduates of the university at Louvain, an institution proud of its Catholic orthodoxy. Together they had become interested in the problems facing the contemporary Catholic Church.

This was a very difficult period for Catholicism. Although it had surmounted the problems of the Reformation and Calvinist heresies, the French Church was faced with continuing discord. Many people were turning away from religion, whilst a number of those who remained were somewhat lacking in piety. The relationship between Rome and the French Church was especially complicated. Gallicanism asserted the independence of French Catholics from the Vatican, a factor which was to be of great importance for the Jansenists. Their movement was afforded some small protection from various papal decrees because the French Church wished to retain this independence and refused to register certain proclamations.

During what came to be known as the Catholic Reformation, the leaders of the Catholic Church attempted to reassert papal authority and bring people back to its fold with renewed fervour. These ideas had been addressed by the Council of Trent, which had convened in 1545. The Council's aim was "the restatement of belief in opposition to the new theologies, and the reformation of Catholic life".[12] The Pope had instructed the participants to define orthodoxy "in order to mark heretics from the faithful".[13] The Council, and wider movement of Catholic Reformation as a whole, reasserted belief in greater piety and spirituality, and it is within this climate that Jansenius' ideas were born. Along with de Hauranne, he began to study the Church's Early Fathers, particularly Saint Augustine. These studies were to prove most important to the movement as a whole, since Augustinianism was to form the backbone of its doctrine. The two became convinced that the laxity infiltrating Catholicism should be expunged, thus reforming the Christian soul.

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[11] J.D. Crichton, *Saints or Sinners? Jansenists and Jansenisers in Seventeenth Century France*, Dublin, 1996, p.30
[12] Philip Hughes, *The Church in Crisis: A History of the Twenty Great Councils*, London, 1961, p.273
[13] R. Po-Chia Hsia, *The World of Catholic Renewal 1540-1770*, Cambridge, 1998, p.12

Jansenius was convinced that a stricter form of piety, based on the teachings of Augustine, was a necessity. However it was the saint's concept of grace and original sin which were to form the most contentious parts of Jansenism. Augustine had stated that before Adam's Fall, man had possessed free will and therefore had been able to choose between good and evil. However, after the Fall, Adam and his descendants had lost this choice and were drawn irrevocably only to evil, their nature being corrupt and depraved. The only way in which man could gain redemption was through God's gift of grace. It was given freely and could not be earned through man's attempts at good acts. This view was shared by the sixteenth-century writer Michael de Baye, known as Baius, who had put forward these ideas in his own writings on grace. However, despite the fact that his teachings also found their origin with Saint Augustine, the work was denounced.

Baius' work provoked others into defining their own beliefs. In 1588 the Spanish Jesuit Molina published his *De Concordia Liberii Arbitrii Cum Divinae Gratiae Donis.* Instead of favouring Augustine, Molina asserted the authority of Saint Thomas Aquinas. Whilst dealing with the same subjects – free will, grace and predestination – the work differed greatly from that of Baius. The Jesuit's stance was that free will was not hampered by God's gift of grace; man was free to choose to earn this grace but was also free to reject it if he wished to do so. Grace was only efficacious "if it was freely accepted".[14] The Jesuits believed wholeheartedly in the concept of sufficient grace, whereby God gives man the grace sufficient to carry out each given task. God does not command impossible things from mankind.[15] Without denying the horror of original sin, the Jesuits wished to lessen the harshness of its effects. Rather than stating that after the Fall man was drawn to evil, they believed him to be essentially unchanged in his nature; he just lacked the supernatural powers of which Adam had been possessor.[16] They also denied the possibility of predestination: they believed that if not all men were given salvation, it was at least proposed to all.[17] In this way, Molina can be seen as the champion of free will. These questions were never completely resolved: at the Council of Trent free will had been affirmed, but it was not made clear what this meant in

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[14] Alexander Sedgwick, *Jansenism in Seventeenth-Century France: Voices From the Wilderness*, Virginia, 1977, p.7

[15] Jean Laporte, *La doctrine de Port-Royal, Tome deuxième: Exposition de la doctrine (d'après Arnauld), I, Les vérités de la grâce*, Paris, 1923, p.233

[16] René Taveneaux, *Jansénisme et politique, Textes choisis et présentés par René Taveneaux*, Paris, 1965, p.8

[17] Jean Laporte, *La doctrine de Port-Royal, Tome deuxième, v. I*, p.261

practice,[18] whilst "la grâce efficace par elle-même" was never specifically mentioned by the ecumenical council.[19]

Thus Jansenius was simply following an established tradition when, in 1621, he began to plan a work – the *Augustinus* – which would summarize Augustine's beliefs on grace and predestination. The Dutchman must have realised how controversial and dangerous such a work would be, especially since in 1611 the Pope, fearing a renewal of the intense debate surrounding Baius' work, had forbidden all treatises on grace. Although the contravention of this ban would cause controversy when the *Augustinus* appeared posthumously, its publication was rendered even more unwelcome because of a previous work, *Mars Gallicus,* published in 1635. Here Jansenius had condemned the French government's policy of siding with the Protestant Netherlands in a war against Catholic Spain. Despite this, the *Augustinus* would not have attracted as much attention as it did if it were not for the fact that the Jesuits had spent two years attempting to halt its publication in France.

The work was composed in Latin and was clearly aimed at a small group of scholarly theologians; it seemed unlikely that it would ever have any widespread readership either in the author's homeland, or in France. However the work was of the utmost importance, since it was with its publication that a century of condemnation and repression began for Jansenius' followers. Criticism of the work may at first seem odd, since the author claimed orthodoxy in his views by attributing them to Saint Augustine. Two separate ecumenical councils – the Council of Carthage in 418 and the Second Council of Orange in 529 – had established Augustine's views as "normative".[20] Jansenius wanted to assert Augustine's superiority in all doctrinal matters, but the ideas put forward were controversial.

The study was monumental and had to be divided into three volumes. The first depicted the beliefs and history of the Pelagians. Pelagius, a fourth century theologian, had argued that by necessity man had to have the choice between good and evil: free will was imperative. What use would a belief system based on faith and morality have if all

[18] Alexander Sedgwick, *Jansenism in Seventeenth-Century France*, p.7
[19] Jean Laporte, *La doctrine de Port-Royal, Tome deuxième, v. I*, p.377
[20] Alister E. McGrath, *Reformation Thought: An Introduction*, Oxford, 1989, p.57

men were made pure by God automatically? Man only sinned if it were his will to do so. Pelagius emphasised that it was possible for man to be good, a concept which was later adopted by the Jesuits. Adam's sin had only effected his own nature and was not passed on to subsequent generations.[21] He died because he was mortal, not because of his sin: he would have died regardless of his actions.[22]

This was evidently in contrast to Augustine's own teachings and was repudiated by the Church as a whole: Pelagius was excommunicated in 418. Augustine had been the chief source of opposition to these beliefs and his victory had rendered him the true Father of Grace and one of the Church's best authorities. Jansenius also criticised a later movement known as the Semi-Pelagians, so named because they rejected certain components of Pelagianism whilst conserving others.[23] They had emphasised the existence of sufficient grace and in his condemnation of their beliefs, Jansenius was evidently commenting on the doctrine of the Jesuits. This criticism incited a hatred in the Jesuits which was to last for over a century. Indeed it was the Jesuits who, in their rivalry with the movement, coined the name "Jansenists" during the 1640s.

The second volume of the *Augustinus* depicted the limitations of human reason. De Hauranne had also grown to distrust reason and this became an important feature of Jansenism, although it is important to note that, according to Abercrombie, a more ferocious attack on reason had been made by Luther.[24] Human reason could only be drawn towards evil; it drew the faithful away from God. Therefore man should not use his reason in life but rather should turn to virtue and morality. To rely on human faculties was unwise and could lead to no good.

Since of all the Church Fathers, it was Saint Augustine who held the greatest authority, Jansenius condemned as weakness any divergence from the saint which may have been taken by the Church. He also emphasised the opposition between concupiscence and love of God. Since Adam's sin, man had been drawn away from the divine towards evil, and because of the hereditary nature of this sin, man could not act otherwise, unless he had been given God's grace. For Jansenius man was born in sin because he was

[21] Nigel Abercrombie, *The Origins of Jansenism*, Oxford, 1936, p.126
[22] Ibid, p.9
[23] Ibid, p.131
[24] Ibid, p.142

conceived in desire. This had also been emphasised by Augustine, and then taken up by the Jansenists, who stated that if a child died before being baptised he would be damned: he was still in a state of sin.[25] This sin did not entirely nullify man's freedom of choice, just his ability to choose between good and evil. Jansenius' enemies obviously suggested that he was in fact denying the possibility of free will, something which had been condemned by the Council of Trent.[26]

The third volume of the work discussed the relationship between free will and divine grace. The ideas expressed in this part of the work again led to much debate: Jansenius' critics accused him of heresy because the views expounded here seemed too close to Protestantism. Luther and his followers insisted on the total corruption of mankind and the necessity of God's grace for any hope of salvation, just as Jansenius did.[27] Furthermore the Dutchman was far from original in his insistence upon the salvation of the elect: Calvin before him had also stated that only the select few would be given salvation.[28] Jansenius explained this belief by stating that man was unable to understand God's wisdom in His choice of who should be saved and who should be damned. The Council of Trent had condemned the idea that some men were predestined for salvation[29] and preferred to believe that Heaven was a possibility for all. Jansenius also launched an attack on the teachings of the Jesuits and denounced their belief in habitual and sufficient grace.[30] He emphasised the necessity for grace in order to commit any kind of good work, and asserted that there was no kind of grace other than that which is efficacious.[31]

The fact that Jansenius referenced his arguments to Augustine was troublesome for various Popes, since they could hardly be seen to be declaring the saint a heretic. This problem was compounded by the fact that the Calvinists had also emphasised the importance of Augustine.[32] Furthermore it was not only the Jesuits who had sought condemnation of the work; Richelieu wanted a judgement not only from the Vatican but

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[25] Jean Laporte, *La doctrine de Port-Royal, Tome deuxième,v.I*, p.97
[26] Philip Hughes, *The Church in Crisis*, p.287
[27] Alexander Sedgwick, *Jansenism in Seventeenth-Century France*, p.7
[28] William Doyle, *Jansenism*, p.6
[29] Philip Hughes, *The Church in Crisis*, p.287
[30] Nigel Abercrombie, *The Origins of Jansenism*, p.146
[31] Ibid, p.145
[32] William Doyle, *Jansenism*, p.35

also from the Sorbonne.[33] However such matters did not cause sufficient commotion to render the Dutch theologian notorious in society as a whole. In reality, by the time of the publication of the *Augustinus* in 1640, Jansenism as a movement was barely in existence. In addition the work was first published in Belgium and there was no reason to suggest that it would have any importance at all in France.[34] Little true controversy had been created, whilst both Jansenius and de Hauranne had few followers. The two friends saw themselves as returning to the authority of the early Church Fathers; they were not creating a new religious order but rather emphasising the roots of the existing one.

Whilst Jansenius was introducing one facet of Jansenism, another was being created. Its beginnings can be found as early as 1600, when Jacqueline Arnauld attained the position of abbess at the convent of Port-Royal near Paris. At the age of eleven, Jacqueline was of course far too young for this position and she was apparently reluctant to enter into Holy Orders. However in 1608, during the sermon of a visiting monk, she was supposedly seized by divine grace and underwent an important conversion.[35] Thence began the strict piety which was to seize Port-Royal until its demise. The convent closed its doors to the outside world and all individual possessions were to be abolished. Angélique – as Jacqueline was now known – demanded that all future nuns should be committed to a religious life and should not be admitted simply because they would donate a large dowry to the convent.[36]

The appeal of such values was proved by the fact that in 1626 the nuns had to move to a new residence in Paris, the former site being too decrepit for the increased number of nuns.[37] The convent then had two sites: the original – Port-Royal-des-Champs – and the new site – Port-Royal-de-Paris. It is from the mid-twenties that Angélique really began to institute the new order. She removed the convent from the jurisdiction of the Cistercian order in which it had been formed and instead placed it under the supervision of Zamet, the bishop of Langres, a committed religious reformer. In so doing she removed a great deal of outside influence from the rest of the Church. Special prayers

[33] Alexander Sedgwick, *Jansenism in Seventeenth-Century France*, p.50
[34] Antoine Adam, *Du mysticisme à la révolte*, Paris, 1968, p.86
[35] Alexander Sedgwick, *Jansenism in Seventeenth-Century France*, p.15
[36] Ibid, p.16
[37] Ibid, p.17

were drawn up, which emphasised the individuality of the order. Angélique's sister, Agnès, composed a *Chapelet du Saint-Sacrement* but the work was denounced by the movement's enemies, which led Zamet to call for a friend to defend the convent. This friend was de Hauranne, now the abbé de Saint-Cyran. This acquaintance between Saint-Cyran and Port-Royal was to become one of the most important links throughout the history of the Jansenist movement.

Gradually Saint-Cyran replaced Zamet as the spiritual leader of the convent; Zamet wished to retain links with the monarchy and aristocracy,[38] a desire which was not in keeping with Angélique's wishes. Saint-Cyran was impressed by the abbess' intense piety and no doubt approved of her belief that only a select few in the Church would gain salvation. Whilst some, such as François de Sales, believed that God was generous with his grace, Angélique had attracted criticism because of her harsh and austere beliefs.[39] The Catholic Church's criticism of the Jansenist emphasis on the individual was based on its fear of the advancement of Protestantism and its horror of free thought.[40] Saint-Cyran must have recognised in Angélique the same beliefs which both he and Jansenius had gained through their studies of Saint Augustine; the abbess admired his austerity and "uncompromising spiritual direction".[41]

However the abbé was not universally admired and certainly was not immune from criticism. Richelieu considered Saint-Cyran's views to be dangerous; his belief in the need for real penance, rather than confession of sins through fear of eternal damnation, meant that absolution could not be gained from priests but rather through internal rectification within the Christian's soul.[42] The Cardinal was wary of the spiritual leader and Saint-Cyran was accused of teaching doctrines which were contrary to the nature of the Council of Trent.[43] Since the Council's role was one of safeguarding orthodoxy and traditional belief, this was indeed an important charge.

Government suspicion of Saint-Cyran led to his arrest in 1638; he was only released in 1643, after Richelieu's death. His incarceration precluded him from playing a huge role

[38] Henry Phillips, *Church and Culture in Seventeenth Century France*, Cambridge, 1997, p.195
[39] Alexander Sedgwick, *Jansenism in Seventeenth-Century France*, p.19
[40] Ibid, p.197
[41] William Doyle, *Jansenism*, p.19
[42] Alexander Sedgwick, *Jansenism in Seventeenth-Century France*, p.29
[43] Ibid, p.30

in the events following the publication of the *Augustinus*. Despite this he was able to obtain a copy of the work. His withdrawal from society strengthened his religious beliefs; he was even able to continue his spiritual leadership of Port-Royal.[44] Whilst partially cut off from society he saw the benefits of solitude and advocated withdrawal from worldly life and values, if only for a few hours per week. Such solitude allowed a man to view all the temptations of life with detachment and enabled him to avoid them. He suggested that his followers should avoid society events such as balls, the theatre and gambling rooms, whilst he also advocated the avoidance of wine and novels.[45]

These suggestions were in opposition to those made by other spiritual leaders of the time: François de Sales believed that dancing and the theatre were indifferent pastimes rather than evil in themselves. The orthodox position was that *divertissements* such as these were sinful if done for their own sake; all men needed to rest sometimes but these actions should not inhibit the chance of religious renewal.[46] However Saint-Cyran did not wish his followers to avoid all social occasions, but rather believed that they should not be governed by society's worldly rules.[47] He emphasised the need for prayer and introspection, both of which could be aided by withdrawal from society. These beliefs were in contrast to those of various other Catholic groups and Richelieu positively condemned the practice.[48]

Saint-Cyran was also a strong believer in the important role played by the lower clergy. There was a general movement which hoped to reform the clergy;[49] it became one of the most striking features of the Catholic Reformation and can be seen in the decrees made at the Council of Trent.[50] One of Luther's criticisms of Catholicism had been the laxity of its clergy and the Counter-Reformation as a whole sought to combat this. Trent had ordered that bishops should remain in residence rather than residing at Court;[51] that members of the clergy should no longer support their families from church funds;[52] and

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[44] Alexander Sedgwick, *Jansenism in Seventeenth-Century France*, p.31
[45] Ibid, pp.35-36
[46] Henry Phillips, *Church and Culture in Seventeenth Century France*, p.19
[47] Alexander Sedgwick, *Jansenism in Seventeenth Century France*, p.37
[48] Ibid, p.39
[49] Ibid, p.23
[50] Alison Forrestal, '"Fathers, Leaders, Kings": Episcopacy and Episcopal Reform in the Seventeenth-Century French School', *The Seventeenth Century*, XVII, 1 (2002), pp.24 –47 (p.24)
[51] Henry Phillips, *Church and Culture in Seventeenth Century France*, p.10
[52] Philip Hughes, *The Church in Crisis*, p.282

that the clergy as a whole should be more organised and better trained, an innovation facilitated by the creation of seminaries aimed at preparing young men for a life in the Church.[53]

Despite attempts at reform, the Jansenists believed that not all religious groups were as committed as they could have been. Saint-Cyran rightly questioned how it was possible to be a spiritual leader if one had no true religious vocation.[54] For him, only one in ten thousand priests were properly qualified to guide the public; priesthood was the highest calling possible since the responsibility was so great.[55] The Jansenists were not the only ones who wanted to reform clerical practices in the seventeenth century: François de Sales, Bérulle and Zamet all desired a clergy who actually had a vocation.[56] In 1611 Bérulle had set up the *Oratoire*, an organisation of secular priests "dedicated to the reinvigoration and sanctification of the French clergy".[57]

After his arrest and imprisonment, Saint-Cyran could give only partial aid to his friends and needed to find a successor who could defend the *Augustinus* and its author. This was to be Antoine Arnauld, a man of great importance to the Jansenists. Arnauld visited the abbé frequently during his incarceration and Saint-Cyran convinced him to defend the Jansenist stance on the necessity of true repentance – known as contrition.[58] The Arnauld family played a remarkable part in the history of Jansenism. Arnauld d'Andilly was responsible for introducing Saint-Cyran to his sisters; later, Antoine le Maître gave up life in society to become one of the *solitaires*, men who had withdrawn from normal society to live a life of solitude. [59] Those who followed this example included Lancelot, Singlin, and later Antoine Arnauld, Nicole and Nicolas Fontaine.

The *solitaires* carried out much important work: they translated holy works into French, and created the *Petites Écoles*, an important pedagogical establishment during a period of poor educational standards. Saint-Cyran believed that education played an important

[53] Philip Hughes, *The Church in Crisis*, pp.283-284
[54] Alexander Sedgwick, *Jansenism in Seventeenth-Century France*, p.40
[55] Ibid, p.41
[56] Antoine Adam, *Du mysticisme à la révolte*, p.37
[57] Alison Forrestal, '"Fathers, Leaders, Kings": Episcopacy and Episcopal Reform in the Seventeenth-Century French School', p.26
[58] Alexander Sedgwick, *Jansenism in Seventeenth-Century France*, p.43
[59] William Doyle, *Jansenism*, p.19

role in maintaining the innocence that children possessed from baptism: it was during this time that their true piety would be formed. The students were taught Latin and Greek, subjects which, for the Jansenists, were vital to a proper understanding of the Scriptures and ensuing theological works.[60] It was also important for the students to study classical authors such as Virgil because their works helped the youngsters to understand the true meaning of Christian virtue. Although the principles of such pagan authors were "inspired by concupiscence", they were pragmatically virtuous: in other words, their principles and rules of conduct helped them to lead a better life even though they did not know God.[61] Despite the small number of *solitaires* – never greater than twenty-five[62] – such gestures drew attention to Port-Royal and by 1633 Richelieu had begun to suspect the convent of heresy.[63]

The arrival of Antoine Arnauld signalled a new generation of the Jansenist movement. The group's beliefs had already caused concern amongst the authorities, although the greatest controversy was yet to come. The Jesuits, amongst others, had been hoping to instigate a papal condemnation of the *Augustinus*. They first achieved this aim in 1643, when the papal bull *In eminenti* was published. This condemned Jansenius' work for discussing grace at a time when such discussions had been banned, without condemning any particular point.[64] The denunciation caused little stir in France, probably because neither the Jansenists themselves nor their particular beliefs had been condemned overtly. The Jesuits were to be disappointed further, since the Pope died in 1644;[65] this temporarily postponed any further action.

The controversy was far from over, though, and tensions were heightened when Habert, a member of Notre-Dame Cathedral chapter, delivered various sermons against the *Augustinus*. He declared that the Jansenists were heretics and denounced what he saw as the cabal that was forming at Port-Royal. This attack was important as it brought the convent and its inhabitants under suspicion for a second time,[66] whilst also bringing the

[60] Alexander Sedgwick, *Jansenism in Seventeenth-Century France*, p.85
[61] Ibid, p.86
[62] Ibid, p.24
[63] William Doyle, *Jansenism*, p.19
[64] Antoine Adam, *Du mysticisme à la révolte*, p.161
[65] Alexander Sedgwick, *Jansenism in Seventeenth-Century France*, p.50
[66] Ibid, p.50

arguments out into public discussion for the first time.[67] However, at this point, the quarrels remained somewhat obscure and the debates concerning the movement and its followers were confined to scholarly theologians. According to Adam, Jansenism before this point "n'était ni un parti, ni une secte, il n'était même pas un mouvement d'opinion"; however all this was soon to change "radicalement".[68]

Arnauld began his defence of Saint-Cyran's beliefs before the abbé's death, by defending his contritionist position. The work, *De la fréquente communion*, was prompted by the princesse de Guémené's refusal to attend a ball on the same day as she had taken communion, a decision taken with reference to the beliefs of her spiritual director, Singlin. A Jesuit confessor, Père de Sesmaisons, scandalised Arnauld by denouncing this advice.[69] This work will be studied further in Chapter One: it is interesting because it set out Arnauld's belief in the necessity of real repentance before Communion should be taken. It is significant that this work, unlike the *Augustinus,* was written in French rather than Latin. For the first time, the debate could be followed not just by scholarly theologians, but had a wider appeal to the general reading public. The work proved popular and gained much support amongst various members of the clergy. The extent of this success is demonstrated by the drop in the number of communicants during the ensuing years in certain Parisian churches.[70]

The success of Arnauld's work emphasises the changes which were occurring around the Jansenist movement. Instead of being an obscure group only known because of the criticisms from the Jesuits, Jansenism was becoming better known generally. However the work was not without controversy and attracted various condemnations. These criticisms generated more interest in the movement and it has been estimated that between 1653 and 1662 thirty-eight of the sixty-eight *curés* in Paris were either Jansenists, or at least sympathetic towards Jansenism. For many of these, the factor attracting them to the movement was their dislike of the Jesuits.[71] This is interesting, since it suggests that the support the Jansenists received was not for their beliefs in

[67] Nigel Abercrombie, *The Origins of Jansenism*, p.199
[68] Antoine Adam, *Du mysticisme à la révolte*, p.149
[69] C.-A. Sainte-Beuve, *Port-Royal, Livre Deuxième, Le Port-Royal de M. de Saint-Cyran*, Paris, 1926, p.297
[70] William Doyle, *Jansenism*, p.23
[71] Alexander Sedgwick, *Jansenism in Seventeenth Century France*, p.65

themselves but was expedient. Their support base was not entirely solid, even within strictly religious circles.

Arnauld did not end his promised defence of Jansenist principles with his first work, and in 1644 he published the *Apologie de Monsieur Jansénius*.[72] This was also an important treatise, since it expounded Jansenius' own views in French for the first time,[73] and thus opened up the movement to a wider readership. In 1645 a second *Apologie* was published. Arnauld and his supporters continued to assert their orthodoxy within the Catholic Church. They themselves condemned any kind of movement away from this orthodoxy as a "dangerous deviation that smacked of Pelagianism".[74]

The increased controversy surrounding the movement meant that by 1650 Jansenism had become "non seulement comme une école de théologie augustinienne mais comme un parti d'opposition".[75] Condemnation of the *Augustinus* was still the aim of many of the Jansenists' critics; even Anne d'Autriche urged the Pope to give a final definitive condemnation of the work.[76] In 1653 the papal bull *Cum Occasione* was published, which condemned five propositions said to be found in the *Augustinus*: four were declared to be heretical and one simply false, this being the final proposition. These propositions were, briefly, as follows:

1. The Just cannot fulfil all of God's commandments since they may be lacking in the necessary grace;
2. No-one can resist interior grace when in the state of corrupt nature;
3. In order that man may choose how to act, it is not necessary for his liberty to be free from necessity, but only that it is free from constraint;
4. Semi-Pelagians are heretics since although they admit to the existence of inner prevenient grace, they claim that man is free to choose whether or not to accept this grace;
5. It is a Semi-Pelagian belief that Jesus died on the cross to save all men.[77]

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[72] Although it was first published in 1644, the work had been written earlier, in response to Habert's sermons.
[73] William Doyle, *Jansenism*, p.23
[74] Alexander Sedgwick, *Jansensim in Seventeenth-Century France*, p.51
[75] René Taveneaux, *Jansénisme et politique*, p.16
[76] William Doyle, *Jansenism*, p.26
[77] Alexander Sedgwick, *Jansenism in Seventeenth Century France*, p.68

The interpretation of the propositions has always been both difficult and controversial, since the Jansenists themselves claimed that none of these ideas were present in the *Augustinus*. The Pope believed these propositions to be heresy because Jansenius appeared to be denying the concept of free will. Arnauld, on the other hand, believed that when the Christian received God's grace, he would always choose to accept it: man would always choose what made him happy over what was good for him. Without the aid of God, mankind would seek happiness in terms of self-interest; only grace could help him to act differently.[78] Mazarin was concerned that further debate would be harmful for both the French Church and state, so he gathered together the prelates in Paris, where they concluded that in order to avoid further struggles these five propositions must be attributed to Jansenius totally.

Despite this, Arnauld and his followers maintained their orthodoxy; they combated criticism by asserting the concept of *droit* and *fait*. The question of *droit* was based on ideas of doctrine and discipline: thus whether or not an idea was heretical to the Church was a question pertaining to *faith*. However the question of *fait* was concerned with people and books: whether or not an idea can be attributed to a certain author or not in any given written work is a question of *fact*.[79] The distinction is important because, whilst the Church is infallible in matters of faith, it is not in matters of fact: human judgements are not infallible.[80] Arnauld stated that the Pope was right to declare that the five propositions were heretical – he could hardly say otherwise without questioning the authority of the pontiff – but suggested that he had been mistaken in his suggestion that they were to be found within the *Augustinus*.[81] As Pope he was correct in matters of faith, but as a man he was incorrect in matters of fact.

Condemnation did not cease; throughout 1654 and 1655 numerous pamphlets were published denouncing the Jansenists and their beliefs.[82] Such works made the situation more volatile, a fact which manifested itself in February 1655, when the duc de Liancourt was refused communion owing to his Jansenist connections. The duc denied being a Jansenist and stated that he had never read the *Augustinus*. Arnauld replied to

[78] Alexander Sedgwick, *Jansenism in Seventeenth Century France*, p.69
[79] Ibid, p.109
[80] Ibid
[81] Ibid, pp.110-111
[82] Ibid, p.71

the attack with his *Lettre à une personne de condition*, followed a few months later by his *Seconde lettre à un duc et pair*. He asserted that the five propositions were not to be found in Jansenius' work. The works were a great success and the three editions printed of the first work sold out in ten days.[83] This is important, since it demonstrates that by this point the educated populace was interested in the movement. The Sorbonne, however, censured Arnauld for his "refusal to submit to the authority of the Church", and in 1656, on the insistence of the government, he was excluded from the university.[84] According to Doyle, this move was significant in that it represented, along with the imprisonment of Saint-Cyran, only the second physical act of persecution carried out against the Jansenists.[85] From this point onwards, however, this persecution became greater and more widespread. The *Petites Écoles* were closed and the movement's enemies hoped that the *solitaires* could be dispersed.

The controversy surrounding Arnauld was, perversely, greatly beneficial to the Jansenists, since it was through these events that one of the most talented writers of the century was to become involved with the movement. Blaise Pascal was approached to defend the theologian, which he did in a series of letters that came to be known as the *Lettres Provinciales*. Pascal had been introduced to the convent through Singlin, and after some initial reservations on her brother's part, Jacqueline Pascal entered the convent as a nun.

The *Provinciales*, written in conjunction with Arnauld and Nicole, discussed many of the issues surrounding the movement, such as the distinction between *droit* and *fait*, and the existence of efficacious grace. Through his use of irony, Pascal defended his associates but also criticised the Jesuits for their laxism. The *Provinciales* were important in that they once again reignited the controversies surrounding efficacious grace and contrition.[86] They were a great success and helped the crossover of Jansenism into the literary world. For the first time Jansenist beliefs were expressed in an amusing and interesting way, leaving aside the dry and lengthy arguments previously afforded by theologians. Society as a whole could become interested in the arguments which were raging, and the issues were discussed widely in the salons. In 1655, it was declared that

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[83] Antoine Adam, *Du mysticisme à la révolte*, p.217
[84] Alexander Sedgwick, *Jansenism in Seventeenth-Century France*, pp.72-73
[85] William Doyle, *Jansenism*, p.28
[86] Alexander Sedgwick, *Jansenism in Seventeenth-Century France*, p.82

all members of the clergy would be required to sign a declaration. This came to be known as the formulary and it stated that that the five propositions were indeed to be found in the *Augustinus*.[87] The success of the *Provinciales,* however, meant that the authorities felt ill equipped to impose their will.

However the movement's opponents were quick to regroup, and in October 1656 a further papal bull – *Cum Ad Sacram Petri Sedem* – was published.[88] The bull stated for the first time that the five propositions were to be found in the *Augustinus*; furthermore they were condemned in the sense that Jansenius had meant them.[89] In 1657 all members of the clergy were again called upon to sign the formulary, thus denouncing Jansenius' work. However legal discussions concerning the latest bull delayed such actions and persecutions weakened, which allowed the *Petites Écoles* to be reformed and the *solitaires* to meet again. This delay was brief though, since in 1660 the schools were closed completely.[90]

By 1661 Louis XIV had called for the total destruction of Jansenism. He saw the convent as a "vital center" of Jansenism and sought to damage the movement's prestige and influence.[91] It was this controversy which highlighted the different factions within Jansenism, since different personalities reacted in different ways. Mère Angélique, Singlin, and Barcos believed that they should suffer the persecutions in silence and take no action against their enemies. They believed that the Church would be harmed by controversy and that they should not cause problems by refusing to accept its decisions. If they chose to take part in public doctrinal debates, then their true vocation of introspection would suffer. Mère Angélique had opposed the composition of the *Provinciales*: she believed that the supporters of Jansenism would be better keeping silent on the matter of Arnauld's condemnation.[92] Furthermore this group of Jansenists believed that, as women, the nuns should not be involved in theological discussions.[93] This view led Barcos to advise the nuns to sign the formulary without making any clear distinction between the ideas of *droit* and *fait.* In doing this they could either show

[87] William Doyle, *Jansenism*, p.27
[88] Ibid, p.31
[89] Antoine Adam, *Du mysticisme à la révolte*, p.214
[90] William Doyle, *Jansenism*, p.31
[91] Alexander Sedgwick, *Jansenism in Seventeenth Century France*, p.108
[92] Antoine Adam, *Du mysticisme à la révolte*, p.239
[93] Alexander Sedgwick, *Jansenism in Seventeenth Century France*, p.115

simple obedience to the Church authorities, they could show obedience whilst stating that they could make no statement on the *Augustinus*, never having read it, or they could submit themselves to the greater knowledge of their superiors.[94]

On the other hand, Blaise and Jacqueline Pascal believed in a much less obedient course of action and stated that the formulary should not be signed at all. In answer to the threat of excommunication, Jacqueline argued that only Jesus had the power to submit or withdraw membership of the Church. Blaise composed a work on the subject – the *Ecrit sur la Signature* – in which he argued that if the nuns agreed to sign, not only would Jansenius' work be condemned, but also the whole concept of efficacious grace.[95] Evidently this position was much more extreme and left little room for cooperation with the Church authorities. Finally Arnauld, Nicole, and Lancelot suggested that the formulary could be signed if the signatory stated that the five propositions were heretical, but were not to be found in the *Augustinus*.[96]

It is thus evident that the Jansenism of this period was becoming less homogeneous since there were various factions within the movement. In 1661 Mère Angélique passed away, which caused a further shift within the movement. With the abbess died the final attachment to the traditions surrounding Saint-Cyran.[97] In 1664 the continued refusal to sign the formulary led to the removal of twelve nuns, whilst the rest were forbidden to take communion. Only those who signed were allowed to remain at Port-Royal-de-Paris; those who had refused were sent to Port-Royal-des-Champs.[98] This was a period of great suffering for the Jansenists, but despite this, several nuns still refused to sign, leading to yet another papal bull, *Regiminis Apostolici*, which demanded the signature of the formulary on papal authority.[99]

A period of calm followed these persecutions and in 1669 the *Paix de l'Église* was invoked; the state temporarily turned its attention away from the movement. The support given to Port-Royal by the duchesse de Longueville rendered the situation difficult for the king; as her cousin, he did not want to act against her too harshly. In

[94] Alexander Sedgwick, *Jansenism in Seventeenth Century France*, p.116
[95] Ibid, p.117
[96] Ibid, p.119
[97] Antoine Adam, *Du mysticisme à la révolte*, p.247
[98] Alexander Sedgwick, *Jansenism in Seventeenth Century France*, p.130
[99] William Doyle, *Jansenism*, p.33

addition Pope Clement IX decreed that all discussions surrounding the *Augustinus* must now end. These events are seen as signalling the beginning of the end for the movement as it then existed; as Doyle states, "even some of the leading protagonists were close to admitting that it was all a quibble about words".[100]

The new figures within the movement were men such as Nicole and Quesnel. They retained the fundamental concepts of Augustinianism in that they asserted that the soul, when given the free gift of God's grace, sought out the person of Christ; that this grace was efficacious; and that man's virtue was an illusion. However the movement had changed.[101] Adam argues that during the five years preceding 1660 the nature of the group altered: it became permeated with Cartesianism.[102]

Nicole had been influenced by the Jansenists whilst a student at the Sorbonne and later became a *solitaire*. He held strict views on the suitability of certain entertainments for the Christian soul. He was vociferous in his condemnation of the stage and in his *Traité de la comédie* he asserted that the theatre was no place for the Christian. Nicole's most important work, however, was the *Essais de morale*, published in the 1670s. According to Sedgwick, this work "constitutes an important expression of Jansenist thought and belief in the seventeenth century".[103] Nicole was willing to criticise those who, in his opinion, did not achieve his high standards of personal piety.

Another important work from this period was the translation of the New Testament undertaken by Arnauld, Sacy and Lancelot, first published in 1667. The Jansenists questioned entrenched practices and argued that it was perfectly reasonable for the liturgy to be said in French rather than Latin, as this would allow the congregation to play a greater part in the service.[104] This tendency towards increased participation was continued when, in 1672, Quesnel's *Abrégé de la morale de l'évangile* was published.[105] Quesnel advocated an austere and devout morality which should be

[100] William Doyle, *Jansenism*, p.35
[101] Antoine Adam, *Du mysticisme à la révolte*, p.285
[102] Ibid, p.235
[103] Alexander Sedgwick, *Jansenism in Seventeenth Century France*, p.146
[104] Antoine Adam, *Du mysticisme à la révolte*, p.288
[105] The work was republished in 1692 as *Le nouveau testament en françois avec des réflexions morales sur chaque verset.*

applied to everyday life.[106] According to Sedgwick, this replaced the *Augustinus* as the "most controversial Jansenist work at the beginning of the eighteenth century".[107] In 1685 he was forced to flee abroad. It has been argued that he was less of a Jansenist than a Thomist,[108] which emphasises the changing face of Jansenism. Its members were becoming less staunch in their Augustinianism and different doctrines were entering the movement.

Louis XIV was unhappy that the Jansenists had continued to publish theological works during the *Paix de l'Église*, whilst their continued criticism of the Jesuits ensured that controversy did not cease. In 1679 the duchesse de Longueville died, which left Port-Royal without a strong royal advocate. Furthermore, the war between France and Holland was concluded, which allowed Louis to focus his attention on domestic matters.[109] Only weeks later novices and boarders at the convent were ordered to leave; Arnauld left France and later died in exile.[110] In 1703 the remaining nuns at Port-Royal, now elderly, were ordered to sign the formulary once and for all. In 1709 they were completely dispersed, whilst the bodies of prominent Jansenists were removed from the convent. In 1711 the buildings were themselves levelled, and the convent was destroyed.[111]

The death of Arnauld seemed to signal the end of the movement itself.[112] However the Jansenists continued to produce numerous pamphlets, which retained a wide circulation.[113] Opposition also remained persistent and in 1705 Pope Clement XI published the encyclical *Vineam Domini*. This stated that the individual was not allowed to keep a respectful silence on the question of *droit* and *fait*.[114] This was not the last bull though: in 1713 a more important bull, *Unigenitus,* was published, which for the first time officially condemned 101 propositions in Quesnel's *Réflexions morales*. Forty-

[106] William Doyle, *Jansenism*, p.47
[107] Alexander Sedgwick, *Jansenism in Seventeenth Century France*, p.147
[108] Antoine Adam, *Du mysticisme à la révolte*, p.285
[109] Alexander Sedgwick, *Jansenism in Seventeenth Century France*, p.149
[110] William Doyle, *Jansenism*, pp39-40
[111] Alexander Sedgwick, *Jansenism in Seventeenth Century France*, p.189
[112] Robin Briggs, *Communities of Belief: Cultural and Social Tensions in Early Modern France*, Oxford, 1989, p.224
[113] Alexander Sedgwick, *Jansenism in Seventeenth Century France*, p.187
[114] Ibid, p.189

three propositions concerning grace and predestination were denounced.[115] The bull specifically condemned the concept that salvation can only be secured through the gift of grace, without the participation of human virtue. It also denounced the translations which had been made of the Bible.[116] Paradoxically the bull attracted support for the Jansenists within the clergy. By 1718 some 7000 French clerics offered their support to Jansenist bishops;[117] numbers such as this would have been unbelievable in the middle of the seventeenth century.

The death of Louis XIV was important for the Jansenists; power passed to the prince regent, who did not feel the same antagonism towards them, and many prisoners were released.[118] Adam declares that Louis's death marked "la fin d'une époque" and that this Jansenism was no longer "celui de Port-Royal et des *solitaires*"; it had become more of a mass movement.[119] This was possible because of a change in emphasis after the bull *Unigenitus*: from this point Jansenism was partly taken over by lawyers and professionals, who were both suspicious of politics, whilst being open to the Jansenist belief in original sin.[120] During this latest controversy, the Jansenists had found their greatest support amongst the lawyers of Paris,[121] who saw the movement as a platform for the discussion of the nature of power and sovereignty.[122] Salvation was no longer the movement's main concern; instead political and legal concerns seemed to dominate subsequent arguments and events.[123]

From the 1720s the controversy surrounding Jansenism began to subside, as other problems faced the monarchy after Louis XIV's death. The Jansenists themselves were more and more appalled by the situation in France and saw the reign of Louis XV as a slide into corruption. The movement became increasingly hostile to both the crown and the bishops who opposed them.[124] This form of Jansenism is far removed from that of Jansenius and Saint-Cyran, and whilst the latter stages of the movement's history have

[115] William Doyle, *Jansenism*, p.45
[116] Alexander Sedgwick, *Jansenism in Seventeenth Century France*, p.190
[117] William Doyle, *Jansenism*, p.47
[118] Ibid, p.50
[119] Antoine Adam, *Du mysticisme à la révolte*, p.331
[120] David A. Bell, *Lawyers and Citizens: The Making of a Political Elite in Old Regime France*, Oxford, 1994, p.7
[121] Ibid, p.75
[122] Ibid, p.68
[123] William Doyle, *Jansenism*, p.2
[124] David A. Bell, *Lawyers and Citizens*, p.105

attracted increased study during the last century,[125] this period is not the most important for this research.

The history of Jansenism is therefore complicated, with various decades bringing new personalities and ideas to the movement. This was not "un système théologique clos";[126] it contained differing strands. It cannot be defined by any one personality or action, but was merely a sum of all these parts. Saint-Cyran is seen as the "founder of the Jansenist party in France", whilst Arnauld is viewed as "the real creator of Jansenism as a coherent position".[127] For Taveneaux Jansenism is "un courant spirituel vivant à l'intérieur du catholicisme";[128] the main characteristics of Jansenism are strict piety, austere doctrine, rejection of society and a pessimistic view of mankind, but these views were not in any way confined to the Jansenists.

Although the Jansenist movement during the seventeenth century was always relatively small, it was nonetheless important when the history of the period is considered. Its influence on accepted Catholic doctrine in France during the seventeenth century should not be underestimated. Therefore it should be no surprise that many critics have asserted the apparent influence of Jansenist theology on the literature produced in France at this time. Sellier believes that during this period Augustinianism "nourrit alors presque tout ce qui compte dans l'ordre de l'esprit et dans l'ordre du cœur".[129] Goldmann believes that "toute grande œuvre littéraire ou artistique est l'expression d'une vision du monde".[130] If this were indeed true, then it could be suggested that the literary works of those who had important connections with Port-Royal would depict some level of Jansenist influence. However it is necessary to treat these assertions with care. As Rohou has noted, sometimes literary works "n'existent que dans une lecture qui est une interprétation où chacun substitue au code imprimé un sens marqué par son expérience culturelle et sa problématique personnelle".[131] It is thus essential that the reader does not

[125] William Doyle, *Jansenism*, p.3
[126] René Taveneaux, *Jansénisme et politique*, p.7
[127] Robin Briggs, *Communities of Belief*, p.223
[128] René Taveneaux, *Jansénisme et politique*, p.10
[129] Philippe Sellier, *Port-Royal et la littérature, v. II: Le siècle de saint Augustin, La Rochefoucauld, Mme de Lafayette, Sacy, Racine*, Paris, 2000, p.139
[130] Lucien Goldmann, *Le Dieu caché: Étude sur la vision tragique dans les* Pensées *de Pascal et le théâtre de Racine*, Paris, 1959, p.28
[131] Jean Rohou, 'Le Tragique à la lumière de ses corrélations historiques', *Littératures classiques*, 16 (1992), pp.7-33 (p.7)

impose on any given literary work a reading which does not exist. With this in mind, it is necessary to re-evaluate certain works in order to ascertain whether or not the Jansenist influence, which some critics see as evident, has been overstated.

It is well known that the Jansenist view of literature was rarely favourable. Whilst this is a concept which will be studied in more depth in Chapter One, it is evident that any alliance between Jansenism and literature would not be easy. Many authors clearly had other concerns when producing their works: the public should enjoy literature and not only be offered doctrinal or moralising works. As Mornet has commented, "l'art de plaire...a tenu, dans la seconde moitié du XVIIe siècle, une place immense, plus importante même que celle de la raison".[132] During the course of the seventeenth century there was a definite shift in the tone of the literature being produced. In the early decades authors aimed to portray a heroic age, when chivalry and honour were of the utmost importance. They asserted their belief in "la liberté morale" and "la puissance de leur volonté".[133] The prevalent mood changed after 1660, when literature became much more pessimistic.[134]

It remains necessary to question why this change came about: was it precipitated by the increasing importance of the Jansenist movement? Many critics would say that it was: the rise of the group, and its pessimistic beliefs, is the reason why the most prominent authors of the age wrote works which were undoubtedly negative in outlook. However, in contrast, Adam has commented that "il est impossible d'accorder à Port-Royal l'importance" that critics such as Sainte-Beuve have given it.[135]

The aim of this research, then, is to demonstrate that this is not a question which has yet been dealt with fully: there remain areas which deserve greater study. The opposition between religion and literature has existed for various religious groups throughout history and is not limited to the Jansenist movement. There have been discussions on this relationship since long before the time of Augustine. Whilst some may state that the two are completely incompatible, this is evidently not always true: the Bible itself has

[132] Daniel Mornet, *Histoire de la littérature française classique 1660-1700: ses caractères véritables, ses aspects inconnus*, deuxième édition, Paris, 1942, p.97
[133] Antoine Adam, *Histoire de la littérature française au XVIIe siècle, Tome II: L'époque de Pascal*, Paris, c1962, p.13
[134] Odile Biyidi, *Histoire de la littérature française: XVIIe siècle*, p.105
[135] Antoine Adam, *Histoire de la littérature française au XVIIe siècle, Tome II*, p.178

been viewed as a great example of early literature and it has even been suggested that it is in fact superior to all other forms of literature.[136]

Thus this research aims to study the extent to which Augustinian theology, with particular reference to the Jansenist movement, influenced seventeenth-century French literature. In order to do this a general study of some of the century's most important writers will be made, in order to ascertain the level of religious motivation which can be seen in their works.

Chapter One will define and then demonstrate the common concern evident in all Jansenist writing – that is, work produced by members of the movement itself – and this will then be used as a base to which all other works can be compared. Once it is evident what criteria should be utilised to define a specifically Jansenist work, these can then be applied to other works.

Rather than concentrating on one individual author I believe that in order to ascertain the true extent of the Jansenist influence on literature it is necessary to study more than one of the century's most prominent writers. Thus the subsequent chapters will each deal with one author and his work. Chapter Two will deal with Blaise Pascal, one of the most important figures in so many facets of seventeenth-century French history. He was at the centre of religious, scientific and literary discussions and is important to all of these movements. His participation in the Jansenist polemic was assured by his sister's entry into the convent at Port-Royal; he is now inseparable from any discussion of that movement. It is his *Pensées* and *Lettres Provinciales* which will be at the heart of this chapter.

Chapter Three will deal with the duc de La Rochefoucauld, whose *Maximes* have long been considered an important indicator of the pessimistic mood so prevalent in the latter half of the seventeenth century. His connections with the Jansenist movement through his former lover Madame de Longueville, and his attendance at the salon of Madame de Sablé, another Jansenist sympathiser, mean that many critics have asserted his Jansenist nature. It has been argued that his cynical view of mankind is proof of his adherence to

[136] David Norton, *A History of the English Bible as Literature*, Cambridge, 2000, p.174

the doctrine of original sin; this chapter will aim to decide whether or not this is a fair assumption to make.

Chapter Four will study two of Madame de Lafayette's works; these novels are important because critics have established that the author received help from other society figures in their composition. Since these figures – La Rochefoucauld and Madame de Sablé – have important connections to the Jansenist movement, it may also become evident that this help also meant that Madame de Lafayette was particularly susceptible to a certain amount of influence from the group's beliefs.

Finally Chapter Five will deal with Jean Racine. His links with the Jansenist movement began early in his life when, after the death of his parents, he was taken in by the convent of Port-Royal and educated there. His links with the movement were also the most volatile: his arguments with his former masters led to his isolation from the group. The juxtaposition of faith and literature, which many critics have found so evident in Racine's work, is rendered all the more interesting by the Jansenists' view of the theatre. The fact that dramatic theoreticians of the time saw the theatre's role as moral[137] held little sway for this particular religious movement.

These authors have been chosen not only because they are some of the century's best and most famous authors, but also because they wrote in different mediums. This is an important point, since it may emerge that certain genres were more open to religious influence than others. They all had their own connections with the Jansenist movement, which may have effected them to different degrees. What is interesting is that all of these figures also had links with the most famous salons operating in Paris at this time. The salon of Madame de Sablé, which was frequented by members of the Jansenist movement and many important authors, is considered to have been "mi-précieux, mi-janséniste".[138]

Whether these figures were influenced more by the society in which they moved or by the religious beliefs of the Jansenist movement remains to be seen. It is obvious that

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[137] Jennifer Birkett and James Kearns, *A Guide to French Literature from Early Modern to Postmodern*, London, 1997, p.43

[138] Paul Bénichou, *Morales du grand siècle*, p.97

there is no one "master key" to the seventeenth century;[139] there is no simple answer to what may or may not have influenced the literature produced at this time. It should be remembered that there were many works written during this century which had nothing to do with the Jansenist movement. Men such as Coulbout, Desmarets de Saint-Sorlin, Goussault and Hommets Patin all wrote spiritual works but were not connected to Port-Royal and the beliefs of those surrounding that convent.[140] Furthermore much of the literature of this period had little or no connection with religious ideals at all; in some ways it therefore gives a false idea of the nature of seventeenth-century French literature to concentrate so heavily on Jansenism and its literary influence. It is the fact that so many of the century's most famous authors were connected with the movement that necessitates this discussion.

[139] A.J. Krailsheimer, *Studies in Self-Interest From Descartes to La Bruyère*, Oxford, 1962, p.1
[140] Louis van Delft, *Le Moraliste classique: Essai de définition et de typologie*, Geneva, 1982, p.70

CHAPTER ONE: JANSENIST WRITERS

Despite the fact that Jansenism in its original form was a small movement lacking any consistent popularity,[1] it did go on to cause a great deal of controversy over two centuries. Its lack of lasting and sustained support is emphasised by the virtual obliteration of this original form after the bull *Unigenitus*. By the eighteenth century Jansenius had been replaced by Quesnel as the metaphoric head of the movement, and the *Augustinus* was rarely ever read, even though its concepts still permeated the theological arguments of the time.[2] The movement changed in both its membership and in its ideals and it is only when these changes occurred that Jansenism could attain any true level of support.

What this examination of the history of Jansenism does not show is how these beliefs can be applied to the literary culture of the seventeenth century. The development of the movement is both interesting and important to this study. It is possible that certain elements or figures in Jansenism may have had more of an effect than others. With this idea in mind a study will now be made into some of the more important works produced by those who were close to the Jansenist movement. These works demonstrate the beliefs which were prevalent at the time and can thus be useful in a study of the development of the group. They were written for various reasons – to defend individual members of the movement, to explain certain doctrinal ideas – but their purpose was always to give the reader a better understanding of his God. The writers aimed to praise God, whilst demonstrating the nature of fallen man.

Any study of Jansenism must make mention of its founder, Cornelius Jansenius, since he is viewed as one of the movement's founders. However he is not necessarily the most important figure within the group. The explanation of Jansenism provided in the introduction has shown that he played little role in the discussions surrounding the group, since the *Augustinus* was published posthumously. There is much to be said for the

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[1] Robin Briggs, *Communities of Belief: Cultural and Social Tensions in Early Modern France*, Oxford, 1989, p.362

[2] C.-A. Sainte-Beuve, *Port-Royal, Livre deuxième, Le Port-Royal de M. de Saint-Cyran*, Paris, 1926, p.28

argument that individuals such as Saint-Cyran and Arnauld played a much more important role than he did. Thus it is not within the scope of this project to study the *Augustinus*. However another work, *La Réformation de l'homme intérieur* as it was called in French, can be seen as important, not only because it expounds some of the Dutchman's views on the nature of fallen man, but also because the Jansenists themselves thought it important enough to translate the work into French.

When his interest in Augustine is taken into consideration, it is unsurprising that in this work Jansenius wished to demonstrate the nature of man after the Fall. He explains that in their first state both man and the angels were "comme dans un pays étranger". When they betrayed God and were expelled from Heaven they fell "en bas ainsi que dans leur patrie naturelle".[3] This shows that from the very beginning man was corrupt; depravity was his natural state. Thus, he always needed some sort of help, whatever form that may take. Jansenius believes that just as it takes a great force to bend trees away from their natural position, so it takes "une force extrême" to change the nature of man, since he is "corrompu, et comme courbé par le péché". It is impossible to maintain this change if the great force is removed and man returns to "le vice de son origine" (p.7). Evidently the force which is mentioned is the grace of God. In Eden He gave Adam sufficient grace, but this was no longer enough after his sin. Without this help, man is incapable of good.

Jansenius is careful to show his debt to Augustine: he states that in his study of human nature the saint had "pénétré davantage dans les replis les plus cachés du cœur de l'homme, et dans les mouvements les plus secrets et les plus imperceptibles des passions". Above all theologians, the saint has shown the nature of man the most adequately: he is "un si grand docteur" (p.13). Following Augustine, the Dutchman describes how man was created in a more pure state. His soul was given intelligence, whilst he also possessed "liberté et volonté" (pp.14-15). However, after the Fall, he was drawn to carnal desires found in "les choses les plus basses" (p.20). If man attempts to combat this nature he should remember that "la concupiscence de la chair" is the greatest enemy of reformation, and is thus the

[3] Cornelius Jansenius, *Discours de la réformation de l'homme intérieur*, Paris, 1642, p.5

most important passion which those who wish to be virtuous must regulate (p.28). Sin has imprinted on the soul "une passion volage, indiscrète et curieuse", a fact which can continually lead man in the wrong direction (p.43). Curiosity leads to other undesirable pastimes, such as the desire to know the "secrets de la nature...qu'il est inutile de connaître, et que les hommes ne veulent savoir, que pour les savoir seulement". From such activities has come the malign interest in magic (p.45).

Man has also become desirous of independence; he does not wish to submit himself to the will of God any longer. If this were not true then we "n'aurions point de difficulté à accomplir ses commandements" (p.53). Man is divided from "cette sagesse...cette vérité, et...cette volonté immuable" which comes from the will of God (p.55). Yet without grace he cannot comprehend the necessity of submitting himself to divine will; even the saints needed God's aid in this task (pp.56-57). Only God is able to master Himself – this is a task impossible with merely human effort (p.59). Man desires to rule others, an effect of the just punishment of pride. He cannot endure to be ruled by others, only by God (pp.62-63). God desires that man recognises that all good works come from Him alone and that we are incapable of goodness (p.74). Even the just require continual pardon for "des fautes qu'ils commettent continuellement" (p.80). In truth, all man's power comes from God; without this help he cannot succeed in any endeavour (p.90).

Jansenius has thus depicted the corrupt pride present in man; without God he is nothing but a sinner. The Dutchman's purpose is to depict to the faithful how they should attempt to combat their sins by submitting to the will of God. They cannot succeed in any other way. He does not proffer his own thoughts and opinions, but merely what he sees as theological fact, as taken from Augustine. His aim is not to divert but rather to instruct in doctrinal matters. He legitimises his views by linking them to the saint.

Jansenius' friend Saint-Cyran had a great influence on the development of the Jansenist movement. He acted as spiritual director to the group's adherents, even doing so from his prison cell. Even before the publication of the *Augustinus* he wished to propagate some of the same ideas which Jansenius had thought so important. However, this move was not

universally popular, and despite having links with Richelieu in the past, Saint-Cyran clashed with the Cardinal over their contrasting views on the need for contrition. The abbé believed that simple attrition – supposed repentance due to fear of hell rather than because of any real regret over the sin committed – was insufficient for forgiveness, since the sinner did not have any real wish to be forgiven for wrongful acts. Attrition was conceived through *amour-propre* and could not be successful. A sinner who sought contrition – true repentance for sins through an honest realisation of their nature – could, through the grace of God, convert love of the self to love of God and the sinner could be given salvation.[4] Richelieu's beliefs were in total opposition to this: he argued that contrition was so exceptional that it was only to be found amongst saints and could not be expected of the ordinary citizen. If the sinner confessed his wrongdoing to a priest and performed the penance, then forgiveness would be granted.

Saint-Cyran was advocating the same strict piety and austerity of which Jansenius had been in favour. He emphasised the gap between the depravity of man and the mercy of God. He argued that although only the select few were chosen for salvation, this was not because of God's cruelty, rather the opposite. Man was entirely responsible for his predicament, so the very fact that God chose to save any of mankind was proof of His kindness and mercy. This was in contrast to the Protestant concept of predestination, which the Jansenists condemned as cruel, whereby the chosen few had been elected even before Adam's Fall. The difference was that Protestants saw predestination as God's choice, whereas Jansenists saw it as a consequence of the sinfulness of Adam.[5]

Saint-Cyran's *Question royale et sa décision* was written before he became acquainted with the nuns at Port-Royal, yet shows his early interest in matters which would later hold such gravity for him and his followers. This work deals mainly with the question of suicide and whether a man is breaking the laws of religion if he gives his life for his king. Suicide is obviously an act against the will of God: only He has the right to decide man's appointed time of death. However this does not necessarily, according to Saint-Cyran, prevent man

[4] Alexander Sedgwick, *Jansenism in Seventeenth-Century France: Voices from the Wilderness*, Charlottesville, 1977, p.28
[5] Ibid, p.32

from lawfully giving up his life for the king. God has given him the ability to kill others and there do exist "circonstances" in which such an action is allowed. These occasions may also allow the possibility of suicide without breaking the Ten Commandments.[6] For example, if a man commits such an action he could be considered justified, provided that he does so in order to maintain the peace of the state. According to Saint-Cyran, the one true aim of the French state is to maintain "la vie de l'invincible Monarque" (p.18). It is therefore better that a subject should die rather than the monarch, whose divine duty and right it is to rule the country. It is interesting that the abbé is emphasising the supreme power of the sovereign: even during the many years of persecution the Jansenists believed that it was right to respect and follow the king. Finally in this work, the weakness of man's reason is underlined: it has "des ombrages et de fausses conceptions", even when it is attempting to uncover the truth. Most theologians have stated that faith is necessary for "l'éclaircissement de la raison" (pp.44-45); reason alone is no guide for the Christian. The fallibility of human reason was an important point for the abbé as well as for Jansenius. The two men wished to emphasise man's continual need for divine help.

Even at this early stage, Saint-Cyran was putting forward concepts which would become important for the Jansenist movement in future decades. Whilst discussing a seemingly political topic – the need to protect one's monarch – he employed doctrinal points to fortify his arguments. Religion was, for him, the greatest and highest authority and should be the end purpose of all activities. This work, in conjunction with Jansenius' *Réformation de l'homme intérieur*, is one of the earliest examples of works by so-called Jansenists. These two treatises demonstrate that one of the main doctrines which they found particularly important was the continual need for grace, without which man could do nothing. Man's weakness should be attributed to the doctrine of original sin; this frailty was contrasted with God's power, which these figures considered to be absolute. There are relatively few written statements of doctrine from this early period; Saint-Cyran's imprisonment no doubt halted his own writings. The fact that Jansenius had not wanted to publish the *Augustinus* himself explains the precarious situation in which these writers found themselves at this early point in the history of Jansenism.

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[6] Jean Duvergier de Hauranne, *Question Royale et sa décision*, Paris, 1609, p.8

Whilst Saint-Cyran was essential to the movement, his successor at Port-Royal, Antoine Arnauld, is more widely known. His *De la fréquente communion* is one of his most important works, especially with reference to the history of the Jansenist movement. The work was an explanation of the Jansenist position on penitence and communion and argued that a sinner should only take the sacraments if he truly repented of his sins in total commitment to God. If a sinner were unrepentant, then he should not be able to take communion. More emphasis was placed on the individual working to gain salvation, since absolution could not simply be gained from the priest without the sinner's own inner repentance. Arnauld portrayed these ideas as the only true orthodox Catholic view and supported his argument with illustrations taken from the early Fathers. He even claimed that the pronouncements at the Council of Trent could be interpreted as giving him support. He advocated a return to strict doctrinal practices and argued that the weakening of such practices had been the cause of the spread of heresy during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.[7]

In this work Arnauld also criticises the Jesuit belief that the faithful should be encouraged to take communion as frequently as possible without true penitence. He does not advocate infrequent communion, but rather specifies that to take communion, however often, the communicant should be in a state of true penitence. By quoting the Church Fathers he attempts to demonstrate that whilst the Early Church advocated frequent communion it did not do so without emphasising the need for sufficient penitence. He declares that "aucun des pères" advised those who have committed "quelque péché mortel" to take communion frequently; instead they advised that the sacraments be withheld "pour quelque temps".[8]

Although he does not specifically refer to them by name, it is the Jesuits against whom the work is directed. He abhors the fact that they propose "généralement à toutes sortes de personnes, quelque faibles et imparfaites qu'elles soient...à communier souvent" (p.12). Each person must be treated as an individual with individual needs. To emphasise this point he cites Saint Bonaventure, who wanted each person to judge "par sa propre expérience" in

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[7] Alexander Sedgwick, *Jansenism in Seventeenth-Century France*, p.52

[8] Antoine Arnauld, *De la fréquente communion où les sentiments des pères, des papes et des conciles, touchant l'usage des sacrements de pénitence et d'Eucharistie sont fidèlement exposé*, Paris, 1642, p.10

order to determine whether he should take communion often or rarely. Bonaventure was a "grand docteur" and deviance from his beliefs can only be seen as abhorrent (p.14). His opinion is held in high esteem and he is "un religieux si saint...un prélat si illustre". This is to be contrasted with the newly formed doctrine of "un docteur inconnu" (p.15), in other words that of the Jesuit movement.

Even if a tradition has arisen within the Church which allows the faithful to take communion frequently, this does not mean that they should do so without "les dispositions nécessaires pour un mystère si adorable" (p.26). Taking the sacraments often is only useful "aux âmes pures". In addition Saint Basil declared in his works that "plusieurs années de pénitence et de séparation de l'eucharistie" are necessary even for "des péchés fort ordinaires" (p.31). The period of penitence is much longer for greater crimes; for example the sinner should forsake communion for four, or even seven, years for fornication, fifteen for adultery, and twenty years for murder (p.32). According to Cyprian and Augustine, both eminent saints within the Catholic Church, it is necessary to have "la persévérance dans la piété, dans la vertu, dans la foi, dans la bonne vie, dans les bonnes œuvres" in order to continue receiving communion (p.48). Augustine had stated that after mortal sins it would be necessary to abstain and not take communion until the priest felt that the period of penitence had been completed (p.60).

Despite this virtuous advice, other authors, and by implication the Jesuits, have taught that even the greatest crimes do not require the believer to withdraw from communion. In their view it is not essential to feel "aucune crainte" when meeting our judge, since no crime is vile enough to keep us from the sacraments (p.49). The disciples themselves withdrew from the sacraments, yet the Jesuits have dared to call such an act as "un stratagème du diable" (p.52). The reader is evidently led to conclude that it is conversely the beliefs of the Jesuits that are more devilish.

Arnauld argues that abstention from communion allows the penitent to undergo a period of humiliation; this is the greatest honour we can give to God because "Dieu n'est honoré que par les humbles" (p.83). Any view which diverges from that of the saint "n'est qu'un ramas

de citations fausses, ou prises à contre-sens" (p.84). Arnauld takes great care in explaining the views of numerous saints, all of whom have advocated withdrawal from communion in order to attain the level of penitence necessary for forgiveness. He himself believes that no penitence could be as worthy as that whereby the sinner breaks entirely "à la vue de tous, avec son ennemi, c'est-à-dire avec le monde". Renouncing all pleasures along with "toutes les folies du siècle" in order to embrace "une vie sainte et religieuse" can only be pleasing to God. As Saint Augustine has advised, "des larmes continuelles" are necessary to extirpate our sin (p.89). It is important that Arnauld chose to introduce the idea of a withdrawal from the world as a way to avoid sin: he is following in the tradition established by Saint-Cyran. He thinks that it is an important enough piece of advice that he mentions it, even though the overall theme of his argument is that the sinner should absent himself from communion until he achieves true repentance. Abstinence of all kinds is one of the most important Jansenist doctrines.

Arnauld also explains that the sinner relies heavily on his confessor. Thus, in order to guide the faithful, the priest should be above blame himself. It is vital that "celui qui se mêle de gouverner les consciences soit rempli des vérités de notre foi". He should have undertaken great personal study in order to instruct others truthfully, whilst this study should be coupled with piety (p.139). A confessor should be called to God "par une vocation" (p.146); he should follow the example of Jesus, who spent thirty years living a life "de vertu, de sainteté", hidden from the world in order that he could acquire the necessary virtue to lead men to salvation (p.148). Jesus was the first director of consciences and those who have taken up this role must merely act as "les instruments", acting only for God. In advocating this doctrine, Arnauld was demonstrating his position within the Jansenist movement: it has already been stated that the group, in fitting with the general trend within the Catholic Church at this time, emphasised the need for a properly trained clergy who were motivated by a true vocation and calling to God.

However, a good and virtuous confessor is not all that is needed to lead the sinner to true penitence. Although the Jesuits claim that frequent confession allows the congregation to take communion as often as it likes, Saint Bonaventure had stated that this is untrue. It is

also essential that the sinner must take precautions to prevent himself from continually falling back into the same sin. He must be so sorry for his sins that he will never want to commit them again: he must also avoid all circumstances which would lead him into their path again (p.178). Bonaventure also taught that he who finds himself "dans l'état des chrétiens de l'église primitive, c'est-à-dire dans la sainteté de son baptême, dans l'innocence" does indeed have the right to take the sacraments frequently (p.188). However, as very few believers will find themselves in this state, it is more usual for them to follow the virtuous path in abstaining from communion until such a time as they find themselves worthy of forgiveness. It does not matter whether the sin is mortal or less heinous, every sin blemishes "un peu la chasteté" and should teach us that true repentance is essential (p.198). The path to true absolution can be found in the following steps:

> Premièrement la confession, et la demande de la pénitence. Secondement l'imposition de la pénitence. Troisièmement l'accomplissement de la pénitence durant un espace de temps raisonnable. Quatrièmement l'absolution, qui est immédiatement suivie de la communion (p.285)

Arnauld continually emphasises the fact that a period of contemplation is vital before true absolution should be considered. This is because it is only through "une longue et laborieuse pénitence" that the believer can be reconciled with the rest of the Church (p.297). Adam's sin was vile as it destroyed the link between man and God, but the sins of the faithful are all the worse because they sever "une alliance beaucoup plus étroite, et plus sainte" with Jesus (p.310). Arnauld explains that, according to Saint Augustine, the only way to seek God's grace is to ask for it "avec ardeur", to search for it "avec soin". This is how the sinner who seeks "une véritable et solide conversion" should act (p.355). The communion which is received by the sinner who has not known true penitence "n'est pas une communion légitime" (p.421). Such a communion is not received within the true spirit of the Church and is therefore undesirable. Once again he emphasises the Jansenist belief that without God man is nothing; he has continual need of God's grace. He attempts to

legitimise his beliefs by referencing them to Augustine and other important saints, with whom other members of the Catholic Church would find it hard to argue.

This treatise is important because it is one of the first sustained works explaining the Jansenists' beliefs since the *Augustinus*. However, unlike Jansenius, Arnauld was not just appealing to theologians, but to all Catholics: taking communion is undoubtedly at the centre of every Christian's faith and thus the issues he raised were of vital importance. The views depicted here are exacting; it is easy to see why the Jesuits denounced the work, since it made repentance particularly difficult for the sinner, which was not something they themselves advocated. However, despite the harsh nature of Arnauld's advice, the work was a great success and gained support amongst non-Jansenists. It may even have contributed to a shift in policy within the Catholic Church, with the clergy demanding a greater level of piety from its congregations. More importantly than this though is the fact that, according to critics such as Abercrombie, this work was "the first serious presentation in French of the Jansenist doctrinal position".[9] Doyle emphasises its importance by explaining that criticisms of these works now took place in French, thereby attracting much more support to the movement.[10] No doubt the general public became more aware of the issues which surrounded the Jansenist movement; some of them may even have been converted to this stricter form of piety. Arnauld had succeeded in producing the first Jansenist work which was in any way popular.

Arnauld produced many other works, including a defence of Jansenius' views, which was entitled *Apologie de Monsieur Jansénius.*[11] Published after *De la fréquente communion* in 1644, it was an important work in that it again helped to disseminate the Jansenists' views in French rather than Latin. It was also the first outright defence of the movement's reluctant founder, and gave the movement further publicity. Thus, rather than being a statement of doctrine, like some of the previous works in this study, the tone is defensive.

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[9] Nigel Abercrombie, *The Origins of Jansenism*, Oxford, 1936, p.212

[10] William Doyle, *Jansenism and Catholic Resistance to Authority from the Reformation to the French Revolution*, Basingstoke, 2000, pp.24-25

[11] The full title is *Apologie de Monsieur Jansénius, évêque d'Ypres; de la doctrine de saint Augustin, expliquée dans son livre intitulé* Augustinus. *Contre trois sermons de Monsieur Habert, théologien de Paris, prononcés dans Notre-Dame, le premier et le dernier dimanche de l'avent 1642.*

The condemnation of the movement was becoming more widespread. The Jesuits and their supporters were hoping for a censure of both Jansenius and his beliefs, so the Jansenists had to move away from promoting individual doctrinal points and instead concentrate on defending those views already propounded by members of their movement.

In the *Apologie* Arnauld supports the *Augustinus* against attacks made against it by Habert in his sermons. He defends the Jansenist view of grace and questions Habert's motives for highlighting this doctrine. He declares that his opponent has brought these beliefs to the public's attention not in order to "lui apprendre le besoin qu'il a à tous moments de cette assistance divine" but rather to "y faire trouver...des sujets d'horreur et de scandale".[12] Habert's character is criticised: Arnauld asserts that that the ploy of denouncing perfectly acceptable doctrine is "un artifice qui a été commun à tous les hérétiques anciens" (p.3). He declares that it is easy to decide on points of theology "lorsqu'on parle devant des femmes, ou devant des personnes qui ne sont pas instruites dans ces matières" (p.6). Such an attitude is evidently in contrast to Jansenius, who should be viewed as a learned theologian and who was considered as "un des plus grands personnages de ces derniers siècles" (p.7). These comments also suggest that Arnauld is asserting his own superiority over Habert; the Jansenist is able to recognise the status of prestigious theologians, whereas his adversary is not. Arnauld is therefore obviously the more eminent theologian.

Arnauld explains that Jansenius' knowledge is of the highest quality because he had read the works of Saint Augustine "dix fois d'un bout à l'autre", whilst he had read the saint's works on grace "plus de trente fois". Not only was his study "infatigable" but he also defended the Church "contre les hérétiques de notre temps" and protected "l'honneur" of his religion (p.8). His beliefs were allied to those of the doctors at Louvain and "ses principaux points ont toujours été la doctrine de leur faculté" (p.12). Thus it is evident that his beliefs are not new, as some of his detractors had suggested. His doctrine is "très ancienne...c'est la véritable doctrine de saint Augustin, et de toute l'Église" (p.13). This depiction of Jansenius is to be contrasted with that of Habert. The latter is motivated by "un

[12] Antoine Arnauld, *Apologie de Monsieur Jansénius*, Paris, 1644, p.3

désir de vengeance" and the way in which he attacks the Dutchman is "si basse et si peu digne, non seulement d'un théologien, mais du moindre philosophe" (p.25).

One of Arnauld's greatest criticisms of Habert is the latter's unwillingness to recognise the importance of Augustine for the Church and its doctrine. According to Arnauld, his rival had argued that the Church could have managed without the saint. In answer to this the Jansenist argues that this is only true in the sense that "un Général ne soit pas nécessaire à une armée" (p.42). This view is backed up by the fact that "les plus grands saints" have recognised that Augustine "est dans un degré de gloire plus estimé qu'eux" (p.45).

This work can be seen as a precursor to Pascal's *Lettres Provinciales*, which will be studied in much more detail in Chapter Two. The two were written with a similar purpose in mind: Arnauld chose to defend Jansenius, whilst Pascal in turn defended him. Arnauld contrasts the poor arguments and lack of knowledge which Habert demonstrates with the learned and more pious nature of Jansenius. However what is most important is the manner in which Arnauld demonstrates this difference in character and learning. He is still polite about his rival: he does not go as far as Pascal does in his criticisms. Arnauld's style of writing also contrasts greatly with Pascal's; he chooses to write in the form of a treatise rather than the more inventive style chosen by Pascal. The latter begins his work using wit and sarcasm: he renders his work enjoyable for all rather than just interesting for those concerned with the debates taking place. The *Apologie* is aimed at those who have either criticised or supported the Jansenists: laymen are not included in its projected readership. The two works may have had the same purpose but it is unlikely that they had the same audience. The *Provinciales* reached all quarters of polite society and entertained those meeting in the salons of Paris; it is unlikely that the same can be said for the *Apologie*. The similarity of the two works is interesting as this could suggest that Pascal was influenced by his mentor's works.

The *Apologie* was defensive in tone: it did not necessarily aim to set out the movement's aims or doctrine because it was difficult at this point to do so. However the publication of the *Proviciales* provided a slight easing in the situation and by the early 1660s the

Jansenists were under less pressure, even if this was temporary. This meant that it was again possible for the movement to produce less defensive works. In 1662 Arnauld collaborated with his colleague Pierre Nicole in the writing of a pedagogical work entitled *La Logique ou L'art de penser.*[13] It enjoyed an enormous success, so much so that for two centuries it was the means by which *honnêtes gens* learnt their logic in France. There were over fifty French editions and many different English translations; there were even "une bonne douzaine de traductions latines".[14] The very fact that there were so many translations demonstrates the great effect which it had on contemporary thought. This work was different from earlier Jansenist works, in that it had a widespread audience, which was not limited to those interested in particular points of theology. The fact that, on the surface at least, it was not solely confined to discussing religious doctrine explains this wider readership and no doubt helped to advertise the movement to people who may not have been aware of its existence before, particularly those abroad.

In the work Arnauld and Nicole emphasised the concept that when a person's opinions are studied, social stature and wealth should play little part in the process. They believed that the development of a good judgement would enable a person to avoid those errors that led to heresy.[15] This is important in that it demonstrates that even when studying logic, the Jansenists' work was dominated by their religious beliefs. However, as Sedgwick explains, the most important point of the work is the fact that it helped distinguish between those areas in which the Christian should submit to authority and those in which he was allowed to decide matters for himself. He should submit unreservedly to divine authority, whilst he should also obey the commands of his Church.[16]

The work may concentrate on subjects such as language and learning, but the importance of moral concerns over simple knowledge remains essential.[17] The weakness of man is still emphasised: for example, the authors explain that in all subjects in which man plays a part

[13] According to James, it is difficult to ascertain the exact level of Nicole's involvement in this work (Edward James, 'Pierre Nicole and *La Logique* de Port-Royal', *Seventeenth-Century French Studies*, 27 (1995), pp.15-24 (p.15))
[14] Robert Blanché, *La Logique et son histoire d'Aristote à Russel*, Paris, 1970, p.179
[15] Alexander Sedgwick, *Jansenism in Seventeenth Century France*, p.101
[16] Ibid, p.101
[17] Edward James, 'Pierre Nicole and *La Logique* de Port-Royal', p.16

it is difficult to distinguish "la vérité de l'erreur".[18] Perhaps this is because as men we are "pleins d'ignorances et d'erreurs" (p.18). Even in an apparently non-doctrinal book, Arnauld and Nicole must emphasise the Jansenist belief in the corruption of man. They explain that some men are more prone to error than others, particularly the Pyhrronists, who would teach that nothing is certain. Their assertions are further proof of "une autre extravagance de l'esprit humain"; they are liars (pp.18-19). The pair's disparagement of philosophers forms an important facet of Jansenist doctrine, which traced its origins back to Augustine. Like other Jansenists, they also add that pagan virtue is false, whilst true virtue must be "rapportée à Dieu" (p.37). The only virtue possible is that which comes as a gift from God; human goodness as a separate entity is thus impossible. This is a concept which was disputed by others – such as La Mothe Le Vayer – at this time, but was evidently popular amongst the Jansenists and their followers.

The authors further underline human weakness when they explain that Saint Augustine had shown that since the Fall man is only concerned with bodily matters, totally ignoring spiritual ideas. In this way, he has no concept of God, merely of the word which represents Him (pp.40-41). This type of argument is used to explain that words and terms can be equivocal in their meaning. Thus if an author speaks of "la véritable religion" it is difficult to ascertain whether or not he is speaking of Catholicism, since each religion or sect believes itself to be the one true faith (p.67). In the same way, if an author does not write clearly then his words can lead to arguments as to what he truly meant, as was the case with the writers of antiquity such as Aristotle (p.68). In order to defend the Jansenist movement as a whole, the authors wished to portray the idea that it is hard to ascertain the truth of a work. Obviously they were not suggesting that Jansenius' writings were unclear, but rather that the sinful man cannot always see what a work is actually saying.

This concept is underlined further when Arnauld and Nicole state that the corrupting influence of sin has rendered man a victim of false and obscure ideas; he seeks happiness where there is only misery. Once man was capable of "la véritable grandeur et la véritable

[18] Antoine Arnauld et Pierre Nicole, *La Logique, ou L'Art de penser, Contenant, outres les règles communes, plusieurs observations nouvelles, propres à former le jugement*, Paris, 1965, p.15

excellence", but now self-love and sin force him to try to convince himself that he is happy when he is not (p.78). Man's lack of truth means that he is unable to express concepts in the correct manner. For example some might say that a pagan philosopher was virtuous, whilst others would describe a theologian in the same terms. However the word virtue is not applicable in both senses. It represents two very different concepts, yet men utilise the same word for both (p.83). This is an idea that was important for the educators at Port-Royal. Finally, even when discussing the nature of reason, all examples are referenced to religion. The reader is told that that "la foi divine doit avoir plus de force sur notre esprit que notre propre raison" (p.337). These ideas on the fallibility of reason are in keeping with the tradition established by Saint-Cyran and Jansenius; Nicole and Arnauld are following their movement's established tradition.

Thus in probably the least theologically based text produced by the Jansenists, their doctrinal beliefs are never omitted completely. Arnauld and Nicole are unable to write without mentioning the faith on which they rely so heavily. Even whilst instructing in the concepts of logic, theology must be used. No part of life can be separated from faith; these two theologians cannot instruct without sermonising. The work is also important because it seems that, for the first time, the movement was able to move away from its defence of its doctrine and supporters. Instead of being written in reply to an attack from its enemies, the Jansenist group was able to portray its own ideas on a new subject. Perhaps one reason why this publication appeared at this exact time could be the death of Mère Angélique in 1661. It is known that she disagreed with works defending the movement, or explaining their views. Nicole and Arnauld may have felt more able to write when they would have less opposition from within their own group. This demonstrates the growing differences between these figures and members of the earlier movement.

There was certainly a shift in the movement around this time and many more works were produced by various Jansenists after this point. In addition the miracle of the Holy Thorn and the publication of the *Provinciales* had given the Jansenists a brief respite from criticism in the mid 1650s. Even though there had been a renewal of attacks, in the form of the bull *Cum Ad Sacram Petri Sedem*, and greater pressure from Louis XIV, this opposition

was not really any different from what had come before. Perhaps the Jansenists felt that, by this point, they had enough outside support to ensure that their destruction was by no means guaranteed. It is also interesting that the Jansenists had made no sustained attack on literature by this point; the movement may have advocated a withdrawal from society and an avoidance of novels and the theatre, but they had not begun the ferocious attack on literature for which they are often known.

Whatever the thoughts of the movement after 1662, it is certainly true that there were many works produced during this decade which stated the beliefs of the movement. Many of these emanated from Nicole, who, as well as collaborating with Arnauld on the *Logique*, was an important Jansenist author in his own right. Indeed Sedgwick has argued that Nicole was later established as "one of the most prominent Jansenist writers of the seventeenth century".[19] Two of his best-known works are the *Essais de morale*, a work which attracted a great deal of criticism for him personally and for the Jansenist movement as a whole, and the letters on *L'hérésie imaginaire*. This latter work is one of the most interesting in a study of the supposed links between Jansenism and literature, mainly because it led to the rupture between the group and its most famous pupil, Jean Racine. It is also important because it helps to demonstrate how the movement was changing during this period; not only was the work attacking the Jesuits, but the Jansenist had now decided to turn his attention to other members of what he saw as an essentially corrupt society.

The initial ten letters of the work are a further defence of the Jansenist position within the Church. It is interesting that, despite the appearance of the *Logique*, Nicole still felt that it was necessary to make at least some apology for his movement. He defends his colleagues against the "hérésie imaginaire" with which their critics had branded them, with particular reference to the five propositions. This was obviously an important topic at this time, since there was increasing pressure on the nuns of Port-Royal to sign the formulary. In the work, Nicole complains that "plus de dix ans" have been wasted on a matter which did not merit a day's discussion and it is of little importance whether the propositions were in Jansenius'

[19] Alexander Sedgwick, *Jansenism in Seventeenth Century France*, p.76

work or not.[20] He bewails the fact that it is not merely learned men who are enthralled by the discussion but also "les gens de cour". Everyone thinks that they understand the matters being discussed but they clearly do not. Perhaps the fact that most of polite society at least knew about the controversies could, in part at least, be explained by the increased readership acquired for Jansenist works, particularly after the *Provinciales*. Nicole asserts that the entire affair of the Church seems to be centred on this one subject. It is now too difficult to differentiate between true matters of faith and heresy. He is also disappointed that so many orthodox views are classed as heretical in the current religious climate and states that "il est impossible [de] trouver [la différence] entre la foi orthodoxe et l'hérésie de notre temps" (*Première Lettre*).

It is early on in the work that Nicole begins to denounce those whose writings have been composed with the aim of amusement. This is the first time that the group had attacked literature in any sustained manner; before Nicole, other Jansenists had been more concerned with religious doctrine. However, in Nicole's opinion, "le but des écrits ne doit pas être de divertir le monde, mais de l'informer des choses qu'il est important qu'il sache". He is most adamant in his assertions and admits no flexibility into his arguments. His overall purpose at this point in the work, though, is the assertion of the superiority of the Jansenist form of piety. He continually asserts that although others, including the Pope, have denounced Jansenius, the Jansenists themselves cannot find any "doctrine hérétique dans Jansénius". Furthermore the doctrine of efficacious grace should not be condemned as it is to be found both in Augustine and Saint Thomas Aquinas (*Deuxième Lettre*).

Nicole also criticizes the Jesuits, particularly for their anti-Jansenist stance. He declares that it was not Jansenius who first condemned the Jesuits; Saint-Cyran had denounced them even before the publication of the *Augustinus*. However, he explains that the most vociferous attacks emanate from Arnauld, who had denounced the Jesuits' stance on absolution. Thus, although various other members of the movement had attacked the group, it is Arnauld who is singled out, since "rien ne fut si sensible aux Jésuites" than to be attacked for their beliefs on absolution. They may attract followers through this laxity by

[20] Pierre Nicole, *L'Hérésie imaginaire*, Paris, 1667

which all sinners should be absolved, yet God "a voulu montrer en même temps que sa vérité est infiniment plus forte que tous les hommes". Thus God has allowed Arnauld's work on communion to become accepted and practised by the whole French Catholic Church. Although it is believed that "la cause des Jésuites a tout l'avantage à Rome" this is untrue as their "calomnies" have rendered them "odieux" (*Troisième Lettre*). Even at this point, twenty years after the publication of *De la fréquente communion*, Nicole still finds it necessary to defend earlier Jansenist works.

In the fifth letter of the series Nicole moves from supporting earlier works to asserting the superiority of the Jansenists' beliefs more generally. He discusses the formulary and the threat of excommunication from the Church. He looks at the notion of *droit* and *fait* and states that it is possible that "le pape peut errer et qu'il peut faire des injustices". As a man he is fallible but as Pope he is able to dictate on matters of faith. Thus it is not "probable qu'il tombe en toutes sortes d'erreurs, ni qu'il commette toutes sortes d'injustices", although he may be wrong on individual occasions. The most important part of life for the faithful "consiste à aimer selon la foi, à désirer selon la foi, à craindre selon la foi... à régler tous ses mouvements selon cette divine lumière et non pas par celle des sens ou de la raison". The fact that Nicole asserts that these practices are more important to the individual than the guidance of the Pope is controversial: it is little wonder that the Jansenist attracted criticism. Like other Jansenists before him, he attacks reason and the capability of men to be able to discern the truth. He believes that the members of his movement adhere to the rules he has set out; they are therefore justified in their stance. Nicole states that Augustine is "celui de tous les saints Docteurs [que Dieu] a le plus éclairé"; thus as followers of the saint the Jansenists should presumably not be condemned (*Cinquième Lettre*). The Jansenists continually used Augustine as the rationale for their beliefs and Nicole is no different.

The fallibility and corruption of man is also emphasised. Nicole explains that "c'est une chose étrange que l'orgueil des hommes. Ils oublient à tout moment leur faiblesse et leur impuissance". Whilst this condemnation applies to all men, it is probably most evident within the Jesuit movement; its members have a "hardiesse" which "tend au renversement

entier de toute la religion". Their "opinions nouvelles, contraires au sens commun" should not be allowed into the Church's accepted doctrine. Their influence has grown too great in the past, a fact which is emphasised by the idea that "aujourd'hui le pape est infaillible dans les faits, parce qu'il plaît aux Jésuites qu'il le soit". This concept is "opposé au sentiment de tous les Pères et de tous les docteurs anciens et modernes". The supposed infallible power of the Pope is a doctrine which cannot be found in the Scriptures and was not recognised by the Church Fathers (*Septième Lettre*). The Jansenist thus blames the condemnation of his group on the unnatural influence of the Jesuits, rather than on the Pope directly.

In the remaining three letters that make up the first part of this work, Nicole continually emphasises the unfairness of the formulary. He demands to know, "une opinion probable suffit-elle pour sortir [du] couvent? Pour aller tyranniser d'autres religieuses dans leurs maisons?". For him the action of the nuns is no reason to deprive them of their right to "des biens communs à tous les chrétiens"; they should not be deprived of the sacraments. The situation is grossly unfair, but perhaps this is to be expected when we consider Nicole's view of man's heart as "corrompu et impénétrable" (*Neuvième Lettre*). Again the Jansenist is defending the movement, but against more specific actions, which he sees as unfair, rather than against general attacks on their doctrine.

The second half of Nicole's work has come to be known as the letters on *Les Visionnaires*, as the Jansenist contemplates the play of that name by Desmarets de Saint Sorlin, produced in the 1630s.[21] This half of the work signals a change in emphasis; rather than defending the Jansenists against attacks on their works and doctrines, he is openly attacking literature in general. Nicole is the only Jansenist who makes such a sustained attack on this area of secular life. It is with this section of the work that Racine disagreed most strongly: it led him to defend his fellow dramatist. Nicole begins by criticising Desmarets himself, which leads on to a criticism of poetry in general. This is one of the most important works in this study, since the Jansenist view of literature, and the theatre in particular, becomes more and more apparent. As the study of these Jansenist works has shown, their writings were

[21] For more on Nicole's dispute with Desmarets de Saint Sorlin see Bernard Chédozeau, 'Pierre Nicole, lecteur des œuvres de spiritualité de Jean Desmarets de Saint-Sorlin: un conflit d'anthropologies', *XVIIe Siècle*, 193 (1996), pp.779-788

overwhelmingly doctrinal in tone, and were written with the purpose of guiding the faithful. Thus it should come as little surprise that Nicole believes that literature with any other purpose in mind other than the glorification of God is to be deplored.

He begins by criticising those writers who are proud and vain; he states that there is nothing "plus haut que l'humilité...les humbles sont infiniment plus estimables que les savants". The humble "attribuent à Dieu tous leurs discours, toutes leurs pensées, et toutes leurs actions". God is the author of all men's actions and it is their duty to recognise this. If the reader considers Desmarets with these ideas in mind then he cannot fail to condemn him. Whilst the dramatist had undergone a conversion to a stricter form of Catholicism in later years, the Jansenists still did not accept him as a true Christian. As Nicole asserts, "chacun sait que sa première profession a été de faire des romans et des pièces de théâtre": his qualities "ne sont pas fort honorables...[elles] sont horribles étant considérées selon les principes de la religion chrétienne". Such a man can only be considered as "un empoisonneur public, non des corps, mais des âmes des fidèles".

Nicole also takes this opportunity to denounce literature in general. He states that the evil of books does not fade over time; instead they continually give off a kind of "venin" which can only harm the faithful. This is particularly true for Desmarets, whose supposed conversion should be viewed as false. He has merely attempted "de couvrir d'un voile d'honnêteté les passions criminelles qu'il...décrit". He allies himself with the Pelagians rather than with the purer doctrine of Saint Augustine (*Première Visionnaire*). In addition he is all the more culpable because he has altered the words of the Scriptures in his works "pour y donner quelque couleur". The Jansenists, as champions of the truth, would find this action unforgivable.

In some ways this is not surprising: Saint Augustine asserted that "dans les plus saintes compagnies il se rencontre de faux chrétiens et de faux frères" (*Seconde Visionnaire*). Corruption is to be found everywhere, but it is to be contrasted with "la vie des justes" which is "une vie de foi". It can only be assumed that Nicole and his counterparts should be counted amongst this latter group. He also asserts that it is "défendu selon toutes les lois

divines et humaines d'imputer à des personnes un crime...sans avoir des preuves certaines". Thus the opponents of the Jansenist movement are all the more to be condemned for their continual attacks on its doctrine, since they can provide no certain proof of any crime (*Troisième Lettre*).

Nicole believes that it is perfectly acceptable for the just to assert that they are virtuous in some ways. This is because "avoir une juste confiance que l'on a ces vertus, n'est autre chose que d'avoir la confiance d'être enfant de Dieu". Such a view does not show false pride or lack of modesty since "c'est une extrême ingratitude, selon les Pères, de ne l'avoir pas". However this does not exclude "toute sorte de crainte", nor does it give "une entière certitude, comme les Calvinistes s'imaginent". However it does allow us to approach God without "une crainte basse et servile". Indeed Saint Augustine often taught that it was right for the just to possess "une...confiance d'être de ce nombre heureux que Dieu a choisi pour régner avec lui éternellement" (*Cinquième Visionnaire*).

After attacking the Jesuits – a factor which appears to be the prerequisite for a Jansenist work – Nicole returns to his criticisms of Desmarets. This author is not to be considered as one of these happy few, since he "n'a jamais pensé à apprendre les règles de la vie chrétienne". He has never understood the necessity of humility and instead "a inventé une spiritualité toute nouvelle et entièrement inconnue à l'antiquité". Desmarets may assert that it is necessary to confess one's sins but he fails to depict the "pénitence qui porte les pécheurs véritablement convertis à entrer dans le zèle de la justice de Dieu". He is hypocritical in that he "tombe continuellement dans les fautes qu'il reproche aux autres". It is impossible to believe that a man such as Desmarets "peut avancer dans un royaume chrétien" (*Sixième Visionnaire*).

Nicole also asserts that men such as Desmarets have attempted to introduce falsehoods into the Catholic faith. However, he argues that God allows errors to appear within the Church in order to give "un nouvel éclat à la vérité par l'opposition du mensonge". Such an action also allows man to consider the truth "avec plus de soin". God is wise, and inspires in us the desire to do good. Those who believe that man can earn those virtues which are actually

only obtainable through grace are guilty of "une présomption pélagienne". In order to combat fault, to pray and to attempt good works "on a besoin d'une grâce surnaturelle et efficace". Any action carried out without this grace is inspired "par un mouvement d'amour-propre". Man possesses "si peu de lumière pour pénétrer le fond de notre cœur, que nous ne distinguons point avec certitude par quel principe nous agissons" (*Septième Visionnaire*).

The letters criticise the theatre for its corrupting influence and portray dramatists as being amongst the worst people in society. Nicole singles out Desmarets because he wants to highlight the fact that even those writers who claim to have been converted, and whose plays seemingly portrayed Christian lives, are liars. Such people could never be pure in the eyes of religion because of the types of lives that they have. Racine was obviously outraged by this attack; his relationship with Port-Royal may have been uneasy up until this point – many of the Jansenists would evidently disagree with the life he was leading at that time – but he had not openly condemned them. It was this first open attack on his profession that led to his rebuttal of this view of literature.

Racine composed two letters in response to Nicole; one was directed against Nicole himself whilst the second attacked his apologists. These two letters, known as the *Lettre à l'auteur des Hérésies imaginaires et des deux Visionnaires* and the *Lettre aux deux apologistes de Port-Royal*, were written at the beginning of 1666. According to Paul Mesnard, Racine held the advantage in the dispute as he "montra une finesse de raillerie qui fait de ses deux lettres des chefs-d'œuvre de polémique", whilst his talent was "supérieur" to that of Nicole.[22] Indeed Picard believes that Racine "est plus tenté de rapprocher à Nicole...d'écrire mal que de penser faux".[23] What is interesting is the fact that in defending the theatre Racine did not reply on the usual defence, which is "la vertu purificatrice de la tragédie".[24] The dramatist's relationship with the movement will be studied in greater depth in Chapter Five, but it is important to note at this point that the very nature of his chosen career was in direct opposition to the view of literature being presented by Nicole.

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[22] Paul Mesnard (ed), *Racine: Œuvres, nouvelle édition, tome quatrième*, Paris, 1886, p.259
[23] Raymond Picard, *Racine polémiste*, Paris, c1967, p.40
[24] Raymond Picard, *La carrière de Jean Racine*, nouvelle édition revue et augmentée, Paris, 1961, p.121

Nicole's attack on the theatre, as explained in these letters, is symptomatic of the age in which they were written. The 1660s provided a large number of works written against the theatre.[25] It is therefore unsurprising that Nicole decided to produce a more extended work of his own on the same subject. His *Traité de la comédie* should be considered as a reply to Racine's criticisms.[26] It is interesting that Nicole felt that he was able to take part in such a polemic. In fact he contrasts with earlier members of the movement in feeling capable of taking on a figure as popular as Racine, particularly when the Jansenists were being attacked by so many others. He was becoming embroiled in more worldly arguments, seemingly for the sake of it. He did not need to write this treatise; others had already defended the position he put forward in *Les Visionnaires*. This course of action would undoubtedly have been abhorred by earlier members of the group, particularly Saint-Cyran and Mère Angélique. The emphasis of the movement had evidently changed.

Nicole's *Traité* was originally published in 1667. It also appeared in numerous later editions,[27] an important fact, since it demonstrates the success of the work. What is strange is that, although Nicole does quote the Church Fathers, he does not utilise their comments on the theatre and he makes no direct evocation of Book Three of Augustine's *Confessions* where he condemns the stage.[28] This belies the fact that he was far from the only writer ever to attack such a pastime: this tradition went much further back even than Augustine. The antitheatrical prejudice, as Barish calls such criticism, began to be articulated by Plato. He highlighted the power which dramatists hold over the audience. He believed that this power could only be viewed negatively.[29] In his view, the theatre had corrupted society, whilst it "[continued] to symbolize the evils which...led to Athens' downfall".[30] He was dismayed by the pre-eminence of tragedy in the educational system, whilst both playwrights and actors were guilty of "slandering the gods and fomenting the base instincts of spectators and listeners".[31]

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[25] Pierre Nicole, *Traité de la comédie et autres pièces d'un procès du théâtre*, édition critique par Laurent Thirouin, Paris, 1998, p.7
[26] Ibid, p.16
[27] Ibid, p.22
[28] Ibid, p.27
[29] Jonas Barish, *The Antitheatrical Prejudice*, Berkeley, 1981, p.6
[30] Ibid, p.28
[31] Ibid, p.38

This view is all the more surprising when we consider the status of drama within Greek society. The theatre played "an honored role in the state religion, and its practitioners enjoyed special rewards".[32] Indeed the "inspiring force" behind Greek theatre was the worship of Dionysus. The congregation would aim to commune with the god through the medium of drama. Thus an enduring link between the theatre and pagan worship was established. The original performances had their origins in the ritual dances connected with the cult of Dionysus, a fact which was echoed by the use of the chorus.[33] It was these connections between pagan worship and theatrical performances to which Christians so objected.

Whilst drama was revered in Ancient Greece, the situation was much different in Rome, particularly during Augustine's lifetime. Here drama retained only a "nominal connection with religion"; it was no longer part of a cult, whilst its participants were increasingly ostracized.[34] Indeed Augustine saw this view of the theatre as proof that the Romans were more aware than the Greeks of the need for morality.[35] In the early days of Roman theatre, drama "appears to have aroused antipathy", but by the time of the Roman Empire it had become "thoroughly disreputable".[36] Despite this, some attempted to preserve the past link between religion and drama and during the time of the Republic, the Senate insisted that dramas be performed regularly in festival seasons.[37]

However over time Romans came to see the theatre as something base and lacking in morality. Actors became more and more infamous and were eventually forbidden to vote, hold public office, and serve as attorneys. Indeed in the later Empire they were even "banned from the very rows of the theater in which they themselves performed".[38] Augustine's disparagement of the theatre can thus be seen as only a further facet to a long-held distaste for drama: he certainly did not introduce this prejudice by any means.

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[32] Jonas Barish, *The Antitheatrical Prejudice*, p.38
[33] Ibid, p.2
[34] Ibid, p.38
[35] Ibid, p.63
[36] Ibid, p.38
[37] Ibid, p.39
[38] Ibid, p.42

In this way, Christianity inherited many of the arguments against the theatre from a secular source. This does not mean, however, that the Church was unable to turn these debates to its own advantage. Indeed it added new arguments and prohibitions to those already in existence. One of its main objections was the parodying of the sacraments on the stage, and this led to many regional church councils forbidding actors of all kinds to receive communion "without first renouncing [their] profession for life". Drama was unseemly and often obscene.[39] Those who partook in it were not deemed fit to receive communion. This practice lasted for hundreds and hundreds of years, as demonstrated by the difficulty faced by Molière's family when they attempted to give him a Christian burial after his sudden death.

It is evident that Nicole was merely adhering to a long tradition when he wrote his own treatise on the theatre. However this was a tradition which other Jansenists had not seen fit to follow to such an extent. The work itself has been criticised for its lack of logic and order: Piemme complains that "l'auteur n'a jamais pris conscience de l'importance respective des arguments qu'il avance".[40] Nicole was obviously more concerned by what he was saying than how he was saying it. In the work he explains that he believes the theatre to be a kind of school for vice because the depiction of passion leads the audience to experience the same passions, something which should surely be avoided.[41] He also deplores what he sees as the lack of reality in dramatic works; if the plays were realistic then love would not be seen as something good, but would be shown to be sinful.[42] If the dramatist chooses a truly Christian subject "il se résout à ennuyer son public", yet if he writes a work which would please his audience "il devient dangereux aux yeux de l'Eglise".[43] In other words, the dramatist must choose between writing a good play and being a good Christian; he cannot do both. Thus Nicole condemns those plays which called

[39] Jonas Barish, *The Antitheatrical Prejudice*, p.43
[40] Jean-Marie Piemme, 'Le théâtre en face de la critique religieuse: un exemple, Pierre Nicole', *XVIIe siècle*, 88 (1970), pp.49-59 (p.51)
[41] Ibid, p.52
[42] Ibid, p.53
[43] Ibid, p.54

themselves religious, since he cannot believe that true saints could be represented on the stage. He sees this as "une insulte aux élus de Dieu".[44]

Nicole disparages the growing tendency for literature to take a moralistic tone. He explains that one of the greatest marks of corruption in the seventeenth century is "le soin que l'on a pris de justifier la comédie, et de la faire passer pour un divertissement qui se pouvait allier avec la dévotion".[45] He declares that in the past the pious members of society had expressed their horror of profane spectacles, but this is no longer the case. This is because "on ne se contente pas de suivre le vice, on veut encore qu'il soit honoré" (p.32). Despite this tendency there is nothing "plus indigne d'un enfant de Dieu...que cet emploi" (p.36). One reason for the base nature of the theatre is the "manière dissolue dont les femmes y paraissent", which can be added to the fact that "c'est un métier qui a pour but le divertissement des autres". Passions such as "haine, colère, ambition, vengeance", and principally love, are represented on the stage. However much the audience presumes itself to be free from these passions, the representation of them will nevertheless affect it (p.37). The stage is "une école et un exercice de vice, puisque c'est un art où il faut nécessairement exciter en soi-même des passions vicieuses" (p.38). Those who frequent the theatre "n'ont presque autre chose dans l'esprit que ces folies", whilst the profession itself is "contraire au christianisme" (p.38). Nobody should be taking pleasure from the misery of others.

Of all the passions, Nicole believes that human love is the most dangerous: it is "la plus forte impression que le péché ait faite dans nos âmes". The worst thing that man can do is to excite this passion, since it appears in his soul "sans honte" (p.38). It should not even be encouraged within marriage because, even in this state, concupiscence is "mauvaise et déréglée". Love is "une source de poison capable de nous infecter à tous moments". The theatre is particularly evil because it inspires this passion (p.40). Those who argue that there are some on whom the theatre does not have a bad effect are wrong, particularly when we consider the fact that "on ne joue point la comédie pour une seule personne". It is extremely dangerous because those who enjoy stage productions are often already "faibles et

[44] Jean-Marie Piemme, 'Le théâtre en face de la critique religieuse: un exemple, Pierre Nicole', p.54
[45] Pierre Nicole, *Traité de la comédie*, p.32

corrompus" (p.52). The theatre teaches the audience that they can overcome difficulties without "la grâce de Dieu" (p.46). Our love should be for God and nothing else.

Nicole is also adamant that it is impossible to portray Christian virtue on the stage, despite the numerous religious plays which were appearing around this time. He believes that "le silence, la patience, la modération, la sagesse, la pauvreté, la pénitence ne sont pas des vertus dont la représentation puisse divertir les spectateurs". Dramatists have had to make their saints appear "orgueilleux" in order to make them more interesting for the audience (p.64). In truth it is those watching the play who are "pleins de concupiscence, pleins d'orgueil" (p.68). They presumably could not appreciate the purity of a saint's life even if it were possible to depict this on stage. The theatrical life is therefore "une vie brutale et païenne". God gave man life to serve Him, not to indulge in such pastimes (p.80). It also inspires false pride, particularly in women, who want to be adored like the characters portrayed on the stage (p.84).

Nicole also argues against the concept that man has to have some kind of diversion. He states that "le besoin que les hommes ont de se divertir n'est pas...si grand que l'on croit, et il consiste plus en imagination ou en accoutumance, qu'en nécessité réelle" (p.86). Furthermore the life of the Christian should be not only an imitation "mais une continuation de la vie de Jésus-Christ" (p.100). Since men do not go to the theatre because of their love for God, they should not go at all (p.102). This view of *divertissement* is similar to that provided by Pascal in the *Pensées*, an idea that will be studied further in Chapter Two.

Nicole's *Traité de la comédie* provides views in keeping with those presented in *Les Visionnaires*. Furthermore, he was the first Jansenist to provide such a sustained attack. It is possible that by the late 1660s, when the treatise on theatre was published, Nicole felt that the Jansenists' situation was easing somewhat. He may therefore have felt that such a piece, which represents a break from the movement's traditional type of work, could be written without prompting too many attacks from outsiders. However, whilst other Jansenists may not have written such treatises, it is evident that Nicole was far from the first figure to

produce such a work. Indeed, although he does not reference his ideas to Augustine, many of his arguments are similar to those provided by the saint.

Augustine gives his opinions on literature in many of his writings, particularly in *De Civitate Dei* and the *Confessions*. He often limits his comments to the theatre, which he denounces, along with similar pastimes such as attendance at the games, for their corrupting influence. Such pursuits were instituted by the pagans as a form of worship to their gods and could have no purpose in the life of the virtuous. In *De Civitate Dei* Augustine states that "the public games, those disgusting spectacles of frivolous immorality, were instituted at Rome not by the viciousness of men but by the orders of [their] gods". He continues by declaring that the gods "ordered theatrical shows".[46] The subject matter of tragedies and comedies alike is "often immoral" (II, 8, p.56). In Augustine's opinion, Greek tragedians were all the more blameworthy because whilst Roman theatre was at least partially restrained, the drama produced by the Greeks allowed "the lampooning on the public stage not only of men but of gods themselves" (II, 9, p.58). They should have at least had more respect for their own gods, even if they were false. What is worse is the fact that, for the Greeks, actors were even "worthy of considerable honour" and not to be despised (2. 11, p.59). In contrast to this widespread view, Plato had argued that poets should be banished from the city "to prevent their misleading the citizens" (II, 14, p.63).

Augustine's views are emphasised further in the *Confessions*, where he admits that in his youth at Carthage he had been surrounded by "a cauldron of illicit loves" and his soul had been "in rotten health". It was during this worldly period in his life that he had become attracted to the theatre, since the plays shown there were "full of representations of [his] own miseries" (Book 3).[47] Such portrayal of human suffering is what attracts audiences, yet it is also what renders the theatre so disagreeable in the eyes of the Christian. Plays serve to ignite passions which must be fought rather than encouraged. As the saint explains, "the more anyone is moved by these scenes, the less free he is from similar passions" (Book 3,

[46] Saint Augustine, *City of God against the pagans*, translated by Henry Bettenson, London, 1984, p.43
[47] Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, Translated by Henry Chadwick, Oxford, 1991, p.35

p.36). The acts portrayed are sinful; an audience should not be able to take any kind of Christian pleasure from events such as adultery, murder or portrayal of pagan gods and ideals. We may be moved by the events but even these emotions are not useful since we are not "excited to offer help, but only to grieve." This is less desirable than may be presumed since "the greater [our] pain, the greater [our] approval of the actor in these representations" (ibid). All of this held a great attraction at first for Augustine but he later came to see that it was wrong and that he was "infected by a disgusting sore". Indeed this period in his life was in fact "no real life at all" since it was so polluted (Book 3, p.37).

During this early period spent at Carthage, Augustine was also suffering from the sin of pride. He "pursued a sacrilegious quest for knowledge, which led [him]...down to faithless depths and the fraudulent service of devils" (ibid). This study led him to thoughts of becoming a lawyer, a profession in which "one's reputation is in high proportion to one's success in deceiving people" (Book 3, p.38). He studied books on eloquence in order to distinguish himself. He later came to regard this idea as "damnable and conceited"; he was taking "delight in human vanity" (ibid). Yet even throughout these false pursuits Augustine longed for something better and he "burned with longing to leave earthly things" (Book 3, p.39). He states that study as an end in itself was reprehensible; it encouraged pride and error. Instead the Christian should concentrate on God and denounce all earthly things. The main purpose of a pious life is always to glorify God.

In his *De Doctrina Christiana*, Augustine comments more generally on literature. Huppé, a critic who has studied the effect of the saint on English literature, has commented that Augustine's main objective was to show that a true understanding of the Bible should be the sole aim of serious study. The Scriptures were "the model and guide for all serious writing; secular learning [was] as nothing compared with spiritual learning".[48] Thus all pagan or secular literature should be subordinated to theological works, although this is not to suggest that it has no importance at all. As the Jansenists believed that ancient pagan literature could be useful in a limited sense, so Augustine before them had asserted that it

[48] Bernard F. Huppé, *Doctrine and Poetry: Augustine's Influence on Old English Poetry*, New York, 1959, pp.3-4

could be used, provided that the end justified the means. Augustine does not object to the use of eloquence, merely the use of eloquence for its own sake. If a writer has a charming style, this is not necessarily a bad thing. However if his sole purpose in writing is to demonstrate his own skill then he must be condemned. The Bible can be described as eloquent because the purpose of the writing is to demonstrate divine truth; indeed this purpose adds to the eloquence.[49] A writer may take pride in his style, as long as its purpose is to promote an understanding of God amongst the faithful. Taking too much pleasure in the charm of style itself can lead to "carelessness about truth and even to the promotion of wickedness"; literature should be written with the glorification of God as its purpose rather than aesthetic pleasure.[50]

Thus Augustine found both the theatre and secular writers in general undesirable. They reminded him of literature's pagan heritage, which the Church wished to eradicate. Inevitably, many of these views were transferred to the Jansenist movement, and many of its theologians, particularly Pierre Nicole, saw the whole process of writing as something to be positively and actively shunned. They believed that man only writes to divert his readers, leading them away from their true duty to God. If his work is popular, he gives himself false pride. Only God can give true praise and value to any action.

Since the Jansenists, and Nicole more particularly, had so hostile a view towards literature in general, it would seem difficult to accept that so many critics have asserted a belief in the group's effect on literature. However it is interesting to note how numerous the works produced by these theologians were. Like Augustine, they held that the sin of pride was to be abhorred, but writing in the name of Christian truth was entirely different. Indeed this is an important distinction: unlike writers of pagan or non-religious works, they were aiming to bring the minds of men back to the subject of God. By reading such works, man would be reminded of his duty to his religion. Anything which removes man from God is to be hated, but anything which may aid the fulfilment of Christian doctrine must be admired.

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[49] Bernard F. Huppé, *Doctrine and Poetry*, p.9
[50] Ibid, p.17

Nicole's other major work, the *Essais de morale*, was written between 1671 and 1678, and was divided into three volumes, each describing the state and nature of man. The *Essais* can be seen as an explanation of the devotional practices necessary for a Christian. They were not written to amuse or to divert, but rather to inform the faithful of their duty and to give them spiritual guidance. After his attack on literature, Nicole had moved back to the usual subject of Jansenist writings: the defence and promotion of the group's doctrine. This was made possible by the increased freedom that the movement enjoyed during the *Paix de l'église*. It is interesting that the aim of the work was not to defend Jansenius or Arnauld, but support the movement more generally. It was no longer necessary to defend Jansenius in the same way as in the past: his importance to the movement was diminishing. This work became popular and was even reprinted several times during the eighteenth century.[51] In fact the English philosopher, John Locke, who had spent the years between 1675 and 1679 in France, became acquainted with the work and even translated some of it into English.[52] By the time of Nicole's death there had been at least twelve editions of the first four sections of the work.[53]

Nicole may not be defending particular individuals but he certainly pays a great deal of attention to those themes which had always been important to the movement. For example he explains that pride is probably the most despised vice. He states that all men suffer from this sin no matter what their state in life: "l'orgueil de tous les peuples est de même nature, des grands, des petits, des nations policées et des sauvages".[54] However the greater their power and wealth, the greater the pride because riches "nous donnent lieu de nous considérer nous-mêmes comme plus forts et plus grands" (p.2). The purpose of all actions is the improvement of the opinion which others hold of us: "voilà le but de tous les desseins ambitieux des hommes" (p.3).

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[51] Jean S. Yolton (ed), *John Locke as translator: Three of the* Essais *of Pierre Nicole in French and English*, Oxford, 2000, p.vii
[52] Ibid
[53] Ibid, p.3
[54] Pierre Nicole, *Essais de morale: contenus en divers traités sur plusieurs devoirs importants, Volume premier*, Paris, 1701, p.1

Men find approbation so necessary because it is an affirmation of the opinion which they have "de leur excellence propre" (p.4). Yet, although men have such a high opinion of themselves, there is nothing "plus fragile et plus faible que la vie d'un homme" (p.19). Man is "profondément plongé dans la vanité, dans l'injustice, et dans l'erreur" (p.302). Since all men are damned by their pride, the only way to humble them is to convince them of their "faiblesse". They should be shown their "petitesse" and their "infirmités", not in order that they should despair, but rather in order that they should "chercher en Dieu le soutien" (p.6).

This search for help is necessary because without God man is nothing. He is helplessly mortal and suffers from "la faim et la soif". Even "le plus grand esprit du monde" becomes "languissant, et presque sans action et sans pensées" when he does not eat for two days (p.25). Despite this weakness, men have a high opinion of "leur science, leur lumière, leur vertu...ils croient être capables de grandes choses" (p.27). Despite this negative view, Nicole does not completely disregard the intellectual capacity of men; they are most capable in "la connaissance de la liaison arbitraire qu'ils ont faite de certains sons avec de certaines idées. Je veux bien admirer la capacité de leur mémoire" (p.29). This is hardly great praise, however, and even in this field men show their false pride: "les hommes sont si vains, qu'ils ne laissent pas de se glorifier de cette sorte de science". They are so vain that they even seek the approbation "des ignorants" (p.30).

Nicole emphasises "l'inutilité des sciences", whilst also stating that "la plus grande partie de la philosophie humaine n'est qu'un amas d'obscurités et d'incertitudes, ou même de faussetés" (p.34). Philosophy deserves nothing but condemnation, since one of the greatest proofs of human weakness is the fact that after the three thousand years during which men have philosophised they have learnt "presque rien" other than that the practice is itself "un vain amusement" (pp.35-36). These concepts link Nicole to the tradition to which Arnauld and Saint-Cyran had also adhered; it is an important Jansenist doctrine.

Philosophers are not the only group to be criticised for their lack of knowledge: man is generally ignorant. For example there are few Christians who can fully understand the many "dogmes contestés". This suggests that those who have criticised the Jansenists did

not necessarily understand the doctrines which they were denouncing. In order to be able to appreciate such doctrinal distinctions it is necessary to have "une étendue d'esprit très grande et très rare" (pp.43-44). It is all the more disgraceful then that "les auteurs des nouvelles hérésies" have convinced their followers that they only require "la force de l'esprit des plus simples" (p.44).

Most men are not able to understand the truth; the world is made up of "gens stupides qui ne pensent à rien" (p.46). Such men are not confined to the savages in the Americas, but are also to be found within Christianity, a fact which underlines the Jansenist belief in the elect. The existence of "la stupidité que l'on remarque dans les mauvaises chrétiennes" is also highlighted (p.177). Only the elect are capable of truth and of morality, since only they possess God's grace. The real state of man is pitiable: he is vulnerable to the wiles of his corrupt nature. Nicole describes how we "flottons dans la mer de ce monde au gré de nos passions qui nous emportent tantôt d'un côté et tantôt d'un autre". Even our reason is too weak to control the passions (p.53).

The weakness of man is such that he should not rely on the opinions of others, as they are probably false. Nicole states that men's judgements are "souvent faux, injustes, incertains, téméraires, et toujours inconstants, inutiles, impuissants" (p.316). Whether such judgements are approving or not, they do not render us "ni plus heureux ni plus malheureux" (p.317). Thus it is "injuste de vouloir être aimé des hommes" (p.321) because this wish is founded on our self-love (p.322). The indifference of others is "plus utile que leur amour" as it does not lead us to increased pride (p.328). In addition, it is true that "le monde ne donne rien pour rien" (p.342). Thus we do not attain praise for the sake of praise itself; there is always some ulterior motive. This cynical view appears to be more prevalent in Nicole than in any of his Jansenist predecessors. As will be seen in Chapter Three, this type of idea also has much in common with those portrayed by La Rochefoucauld. This fact seems to suggest that this type of view was increasingly prevalent during this period.

Nicole again feels that it is necessary to return to the theme of *divertissement*. Man's weakness is further emphasised by this need for distraction and "des plaisirs". It is difficult

for him to find any kind of repose. Men are compared to "des oiseaux qui sont en l'air, mais qui n'y peuvent demeurer sans mouvement, ni presque en un même lieu, parce que leur appui n'est pas solide" (pp.59-60). Man relies on "les jugements des hommes, sur les plaisirs des sens, sur les consolations humaines". However, these things all lack the ability to support him permanently, thus he falls into a state of "tristesse". This is also an idea portrayed by Pascal in the *Pensées*, as will be shown in Chapter Two. Continual change fools man into thinking that he could be happy. This is not possible because of the fact that man carries with him "la rage et l'enfer", which comes from his corruption (p.61).

Nicole depicts another theme that is important in the *Maximes*, when he explains that those who join the army do not do so from bravery and the desire to protect their monarch and the peace of the state, but rather because of their "impuissance de mener une vie réglée" (p.63). Nicole also states that it is a common belief that participants in a ball merely constitute "une assemblée de personnes agréables qui ne songent qu'à se divertir, à prendre part, et à contribuer au plaisir commun" (p.169). However, in reality, such a gathering is "un massacre horrible d'âmes qui s'entre-tuent les unes les autres" and is made up of "des femmes en qui le démon habite...et des hommes qui percent le cœur de ces femmes par leurs criminelles idolâtries" (p.170). The public may believe that this is an innocent pastime, but this is far from being the case. This view is very close to that held by Pascal; as we shall see in Chapter Three, the *Pensées* provide a very similar analysis of *divertissement*. It is also similar to the thought of Saint-Cyran and other Jansenists: the concept that society events, such as balls, should be avoided was evidently important to the movement as a whole.

The weakness, and corrupt nature, of man is to be contrasted with the power and glory of God. It is only in Him that mankind can have any kind of virtue or reliability. Nicole believes that all he has said about the weakness of man "ne sert qu'à relever le pouvoir de cette grâce", in other words, the grace which God gives to help man in his mortal weakness. The strength of this grace is emphasised because it is the only force capable of aiding "une créature si faible et si misérable" as man (p.71). The true effect of this grace is to convince men of their corrupt state; it must "leur faire reconnaître devant Dieu...que leur vie n'est

qu'une image qui passe, et une vapeur qui se dissipe" (p.75). The difference between the sinners and the just is that the former "marchent dans leurs propres voies", whilst the latter "marchent dans les voies de Dieu" (pp.77-78). Indeed one of man's greatest faults is "de ne vouloir pas connaître la volonté de Dieu" (p.98). If he possessed "le cœur droit et simple" then God's will would appear to him clearly (p.115). We each have our own path to God, thus good Christians must know both "la voie commune [et]...cette voie qui nous est propre" (p.92). Like other Jansenists, it is important for Nicole to emphasise the doctrine of God's elect; he is keeping to the tradition established by the group's earlier works.

At this time there was an increased awareness of other religions: the missionaries brought back details of new deities and doctrines. Thus, in the second volume, Nicole comments that it is not only Christians who believe themselves to be right and justified in their religion. Each religious group possesses "différentes morales, selon les différentes professions".[55] Whilst Christians are correct in asserting their righteousness in religion, others emphasise their self-love since "il n'y a point de témérité égale à celle qui porte la plupart des hommes à suivre une religion plutôt qu'une autre". This is evident through the fact that Christianity "a un éclat si grand et si particulier par sa sainteté, son antiquité, ses miracles" (p.13). Nicole believes thatother religions have no such miracles or prophets and are unable to sustain " la moindre recherche et le moindre examen" (p.14).

It is interesting that Nicole chooses to emphasise the fact that even amongst the Christians there are few who truly follow God, since there are "peu de justes et peu d'élus". The majority of people follow "témérairement leurs passions...ils s'avancent à grands pas vers la mort" (pp.18-19). Only those who possess God's grace could be considered "chrétiens et catholiques" (p.49). These true Christians have a duty to know "la voie du salut, la voie de la paix, la voie du ciel" (p.24). This is particularly important because even those who know God are not entirely free from "cette corruption d'esprit" (p.60). The elect also differ from the majority in that in Heaven they will enjoy a "bonheur" which is accompanied by "un esprit de société et d'union"; they will be able to participate in an amicable society which

[55] Pierre Nicole, *Essais de morale: contenus en divers traités sur plusieurs devoirs importants, volume second*, Paris, 1701, p.10

can be contrasted with the falseness of the worldly society (p.87). Furthermore their good actions will become known amongst all the elect and will be "des sujets de joie, de louange" (p.88).

Nicole again takes the opportunity to criticise literature in this second volume: he states that "les livres sont les ouvrages des hommes; et la corruption de l'homme se mêle dans la plupart de ses actions". They are also to be condemned because such works show the effects of ignorance and concupiscence (p.268), whilst the passions depicted therein "portent ensuite cette impression insensible dans l'esprit de ceux qui les lisent" (pp.268-269). In reading books "nous nous remplissons insensiblement des vices des hommes" (p.269). This is not to deny that reading can be permissible in any sense; if we do so "pour remettre notre esprit lorsqu'il est fatigué...pour le renouveler et pour l'occuper" then we are not necessarily committing any sin. The trouble comes when such acts become "eux-mêmes dangereux". This is possible, for example, if we were to read as a *divertissement* whilst rejecting more serious study (p.275). Like Augustine, Nicole believes that such things are to be allowed provided that the greatest end of our work is our better knowledge of the Bible and religion.

However one work of which Nicole does approve is Pascal's *Pensées*. Nicole explains that this work "peut être l'un des plus utiles que l'on puisse mettre entre les mains des princes qui ont de l'esprit". As a writer Pascal is to be praised as the *Pensées* possess "un air si grand, si élevé, et en même temps si simple et si éloigné d'affectation dans tout ce qu'il écrit" (p.350). Thus the reader can conclude that if the subject of a work is the true knowledge of God, then such a work is most definitely worthy of praise. Whether or not the *Pensées* can be considered to be an entirely Jansenist work will be studied in Chapter Two, but it is certainly clear that Nicole approved of them. As long as the purpose of literature is the glorification of God, there should be little objection. This also highlights the difference between Nicole and some of the earlier members of the Jansenist movement: Mère Angélique did not approve of the *Provinciales* because she thought that the group should remain silent on such matters in order to maintain their humility. Nicole obviously had no such scruples.

In the final volume of the *Essais*, Nicole again denounces the distraction of various *divertissements*, and declares that there are few confessors who would wish to authorise "le bal, la comédie, les romans, la manière dont les femmes s'habillent présentement".[56] Instead of such frivolous activities, the faithful should be making a study of their nature in order that they should know themselves better. The just man must spend his life seeking to know "ses passions, ses humeurs, ses faiblesses, ses défauts" (p.90); if he knows himself better then he will be able to recognise his own sin. This study is particularly important because it is impossible to know whether an individual is one of God's chosen people. The reader is told that "on ne connaît jamais certainement que l'on soit à Dieu, quoique l'on puisse connaître quelquefois avec certitude que l'on n'y est pas". In addition man does not know whether "l'amour de Dieu...est le principe" in his actions, nor does he know if his sins "sont remis" (p.140). Often he thinks that he is a recipient of God's grace when in fact this is not the case; in reality "nous demeurerons toujours inconnus à nous-mêmes en cette vie" (p.141). Again Nicole was emphasising a well-established Jansenist tradition when he chose to underline this point.

It is therefore obvious that the works by Nicole considered here are definitely doctrinal in nature. His main emphasis is on the lack of self-knowledge possessed by man, coupled with his corruption and self-love. Like other Jansenists he chooses to highlight themes such as false pride, the existence of the elect; he has a particularly harsh view of mankind. He wishes to condemn those who do not study religion enough, since they evidently do not wish to know their God better. Like Augustine he believes that this is the sole study with any real significance or importance. He criticises literary works and states that novels merely distract man from his religious duties, whilst also inspiring worthless passions in the already corrupt soul. Whilst he praises Pascal's style in the *Pensées*, he is clearly only interested in stylistic value in as much as it allows the reader to become more involved in devotional study. Literature is therefore only worthy if it brings us closer to God.

[56] Pierre Nicole, *Essais de morale: contenus en divers traités sur plusieurs devoirs importants, Troisième volume*, Paris, 1701, p.82

In contrast to these doctrinal works is Racine's purely historical work on the Jansenist movement, *Abrégé de l'histoire de Port-Royal*. It is unclear if the Jansenists knew of Racine's planned work, which was unfinished and remained unpublished until 1742.[57] Racine's early connections with, and education at, Port-Royal have been well documented. Orphaned at an early age, Racine was placed in the care of his grandmother who retired to the convent, where he joined her in 1649.

As we have seen, the writings of strictly Jansenist authors are overwhelmingly doctrinal in tone, written to inform the faithful in theological matters. However Racine's history was not written with the intention of giving doctrinal advice to his readers: it is a description of events rather than an apology for the Jansenist movement. Obviously he does discuss the theological stance taken by members of the group, but does not necessarily state that these views are superior to any others. For example he describes how Saint-Cyran spent both day and night "partie dans la prière, et partie à composer des ouvrages qui puissent être utiles à l'Église" (p.59). He persuaded his followers that "sans aimer Dieu, le pécheur ne pouvait être justifié" (p.63). Yet he does not state that Saint-Cyran's dedication to his religion should be the aim for all clergymen.

Racine concentrates his descriptions on the convent of Port-Royal, and explains that many persons of quality "s'y venaient retirer de temps en temps pour y chercher Dieu dans le repos de la solitude", including the duc and duchesse de Liancourt, a couple known for "leur vertu" and "leur grande charité envers les pauvres". He emphasises the sanctity of the convent and states that the residents are "saintes filles"(p.72). Racine also highlights the help that the convent has given to the poor: the dowry which the nuns provided was utilised for this purpose. In addition a doctor was present at Port-Royal-des-Champs to help those unable to afford proper medical facilities (p.75). As one would perhaps expect, he points out that the convent has provided an excellent education for its pupils, a fact which has attracted jealousy (p.76). These good works demonstrate a different side to the Jansenists; this had not really been drawn on before by members of the movement.

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[57] Jean Racine, *Abrégé de l'histoire de Port-Royal*, Alain Couprie (ed), Paris, 1994, pp.7-8

Racine believes that if the religious order at Port-Royal had been allowed to continue in peace without outside interference, it may have led to "le relâchement". God wished to affirm "le bien" of the house and bring it to "un plus haut degré de sainteté"; this has been made possible because of the harsh tribulations endured by the nuns (p.77). This suggests that the persecution was a sign of their chosen status, a concept which is important in *Athalie* and *Esther*. Racine also states that Arnauld is not the "agresseur" in these disputes, and merely wrote his *De la fréquente communion* in order to defend those who are "attachés aux véritables maximes de l'Église", not to attack the Jesuits who are not specifically named in the work (p.79).

Racine briefly criticises the Jesuits by stating that "la plus grande partie d'entre eux" are convinced that they are only ever attacked by heretics. They only read "les écrits de leurs pères" rather than having any real knowledge of the Church (p.87). They have labelled Jansenius a Calvinist and a heretic, but this is how they "traitent ordinairement tous leurs adversaires" (p.91). Even so, the nuns should have been excluded from such arguments as they "n'avaient originairement aucune connaissance des matières contestées" (p.180). Racine defends their honour vigorously, but his work finishes abruptly on the subject of the formulary, only explaining the events which had occurred.

The *Abrégé de l'histoire de Port-Royal* reads as we would therefore expect: as an history of the events surrounding the convent of Port-Royal. Racine gives very little personal opinion on the matters at hand. He defends the nuns with great vigour, yet he does not comment on the superiority of Jansenist doctrine over any other kind of piety. He does not sermonise but rather describes. Indeed Picard has stated, "on note avec un peu d'étonnement que, dans *l'Abrégé de l'histoire de Port-Royal*, l'aspect proprement théologique est presque entièrement sacrifié".[58] Perhaps this partial detachment originates from Racine's time spent as royal historiographer, where he would have had a great deal of practice in describing events without portraying his personal feelings. Yet it could also be true that Racine lacked any true affinity with Jansenist doctrine. He evidently felt great sympathy with the personalities within the movement, yet this does not necessarily confirm his status as a true

[58] Raymond Picard, *La carrière de Jean Racine*, p.468

follower of Jansenism. He may not have had an affinity with all of their doctrine. This concept will be studied in much greater depth in Chapter Five.

What does become obvious from the study of such specifically Jansenist works is that the authors never waver from their purpose of advising the faithful. They write to condemn laxity, to promote their clearly austere views, and above all to uphold Christian truth as they see it. They do not write to distract the faithful from God, but rather to bring them closer to Him. However this is not to say that their only output was concerned with dry theological argument. Indeed, as Gheeraert has commented, the lives of many of the *Solitaires* were filled with "le chant et la poésie".[59] The tradition of religious poetry at Port-Royal began with Saint-Cyran: he wrote "des vers latins et français" in his youth, although much of this has been lost.[60] Furthermore he encouraged Robert d'Andilly and Sacy in their own compositions.[61] Some of the work of these figures was published in 1671 in the *Recueil de poésies chrétiennes*. Even Jacqueline Pascal, who had been forbidden from writing poetry when she took the veil, wrote a short work proclaiming the miracle of the Holy Thorn.[62] It was possible for the Jansenists to turn their attention to such publications at this time, since they were enjoying a certain amount of respite from controversy. However the Jansenists did not approve of all poetry. In fact the power of the poet was considered to be not too far removed from that of the dramatist.

In addition to their poetical works, the *Solitaires* also produced translations of various religious works, which have often been admired for their style. For example Sacy worked on a translation of Prosper's *De Ingratis*, which has been described as "un trésor de la pensée augustinienne". Published in 1647, the work was a success and three further editions were released between 1717 and 1726.[63] In addition, the *Solitaires*' translations of Augustine's *Confessions* and of the Bible are both well known and respected. What these

[59] Tony Gheeraert, *Le chant de la grâce: Port-Royal et la poésie d'Arnauld d'Andilly à Racine*, Paris, 2003, p.13
[60] Ibid, p.29
[61] Ibid, p.30
[62] Ibid, p.73
[63] Ibid, p.36

works and the poetry of Port-Royal have in common is their mutual aim to glorify God; this should be the sole aim of all works.

After this study of various Jansenist works, it should be evident that they all have certain things in common. Firstly, they are concerned with the depiction of man's fallibility, which is to be contrasted with the power of God. Without His grace, man can do nothing that is good. Secondly, the doctrinal and dogmatic nature of the works is overwhelming. The writers were not interested in matters of style, except in the way it can contribute to man's understanding of faith. Indeed the continued emphasis on dogmatic reiteration of the same issues would lead many to conclude that they cared very little for style. Thus to be classed as Jansenist, a work should portray the views of the movement, whilst aiming to bring the faithful closer to God. Since this was the overriding aim of the movement, any work that does not have this purpose cannot be entirely classed as Jansenist.

It is also possible to discern a certain amount of development in these works. Saint-Cyran and Jansenius obviously had little care about defending their views against attacks, because when they were written the Jansenist movement did not officially exist; these debates had not become widespread. However later writers such as Arnauld were only too aware of this opposition to the Jansenist form of faith, so it comes as little surprise that many of the works produced after 1640 were written in defence of an individual, or a particular doctrine. Nicole's example, however, provides proof that by the 1670s it was again possible to write something that presented new ideas. The nature of the movement had also changed: earlier Jansenists had not been so concerned with the denunciation of literature as Nicole had been, whilst figures such as Mère Angélique would undoubtedly have disagreed with this participation in more worldly affairs. He is probably the only Jansenist who felt that it was necessary to write so extensively, and fervently, against literature. It will be interesting to see whether any similar developments can be discerned in the more worldly literature of the century.

CHAPTER TWO: PASCAL

Pascal is undoubtedly one of the most important figures in the intellectual history of France and he is also central to any discussion of Jansenism and its affects on literature. His defence of Arnauld in the *Lettres Provinciales* helped to give the movement a level of publicity which it had not attained up until that point. In addition, the work was produced at a time when the debate surrounding the five propositions, and the general condemnation of Jansenius, was of the utmost importance. Pascal has come to be viewed as one of the "most intellectual and persuasive advocates of Christian ideas";[1] he clearly played an important role in the religious debate of this period.

However, do his connections with Port-Royal necessitate a Jansenist reading of his works? There can be little argument with Goldmann that Pascal "n'a jamais voulu être autre chose qu'un chrétien fidèle et orthodoxe". His Christianity "loin d'être un simple vêtement extérieur pour sa pensée, est intimement lié à son essence même". The question that should be asked is "quel christianisme" was the predominant force in his life?[2] There has always been much debate amongst critics about Pascal's religious allegiances, with certain critics viewing him as a philosopher [3] – a view which is not in keeping with the Jansenist form of piety – whilst some have even suggested that he can be seen as a Protestant.[4] His two most popular works are the *Lettres Provinciales* and the *Pensées*, but these are far from the only pieces he produced. During his lifetime he was well known as a scientist and mathematician and he wrote numerous scientific works which were often highly praised. However this latter depiction hardly seems compatible with the possible view of Pascal as a Jansenist. Throughout his life, tension existed between these two disciplines, despite the fact that the Jansenist form of piety did not support the worldly pursuit of greater human knowledge.

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[1] John Cruickshank, *Pascal: Pensées*, London, 1983, p.9
[2] Lucien Goldmann, *Le Dieu caché: Etude sur la vision tragique dans les* Pensées *de Pascal et le théâtre de Racine*, Paris, 1959, p.84
[3] Thomas More Harrington, *Pascal philosophe: Une étude unitaire de la pensée de Pascal*, Paris, 1982, p.5
[4] M. Scholtens, *Le Mysticisme de Pascal*, Assen, 1974, p.40. The main reason for this claim is that Pascal shows "peu d'admiration" for the Virgin Mary.

As a young man, Pascal was certainly precocious and demonstrated his genius from an early age. He was educated entirely by his father, Etienne Pascal, who was himself a highly educated man. Etienne spoke both Greek and Latin fluently and was known as one of the most accomplished mathematicians of his day.[5] He occasionally took his son to the meetings then gathering around Mersenne, an important figure in this field. Here Pascal would have been in contact with the country's leading scientists. Thus it can be of little surprise that in 1640, aged seventeen, Pascal produced an essay which would form the basis of his *Traité des coniques*.[6] However his education was not restricted to the sciences: he also studied languages and philosophy.[7] He composed important works on mathematics, atmospheric pressure, and a treatise on the vacuum; he also invented the world's first calculating machine.[8]

Etienne Pascal has been described as a religious man, in that he at least carried out all his religious obligations.[9] He did not neglect his children's religious education either.[10] It was through his father that Pascal was to first come into contact with Jansenism. Etienne dislocated his leg after slipping on ice and the men who came to treat him had been converted to a Jansenist form of piety and wished to pass on both their new beliefs. They remained in the house for three months, and in 1646 Pascal underwent his first conversion to religion. His two sisters were also seized by a newfound piety, though Jacqueline's conversion was more absolute. She resolved to enter Port-Royal as a nun, although she was prevented from doing so immediately by her father.

The affect of these events on Pascal remains uncertain, although from this point he does appear to have at least acknowledged the possibility of a more austere morality, even if he did not pursue it himself.[11] In 1647 he visited Paris to consult various doctors on his state of health and was advised to avoid work and seek pleasure to aid his illness. He seems to have

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[5] Ben Rogers, 'Pascal's Life and Times' in Nicholas Hammond (ed), *The Cambridge Companion to Pascal*, Cambridge, 2003, p.5
[6] John Cruickshank, *Pascal: Pensées*, p.21
[7] Jean Mesnard, *Pascal: L'homme et l'œuvre*, Paris, 1951, pp.21-22
[8] John Cruickshank, *Pascal: Pensées*, p.22
[9] Ibid, p.21
[10] Jean Mesnard, *Pascal: L'homme et l'œuvre*, p.23
[11] Alban Krailsheimer, *Pascal*, Oxford, 1980, p.7

generally passed his time in agreeable social activities. In 1651 Etienne Pascal died and Jacqueline believed that his death would remove the final obstacle from her entry into holy orders at Port-Royal. Unfortunately for her, Pascal now disagreed with the move.

During this time his life was confusing as he was drawn into a more worldly scene, although this should not be overstated; Gilberte claimed that for all her brother's society activities "il ne connut jamais le libertinage".[12] She may be biased though: as a devout figure, Gilberte would obviously want to deny any seemingly irreligious activities. Despite her beliefs, by 1652 Pascal was continuing his scientific work and gave a lecture on his theories on the vacuum, also sending an example of his calculating machine to Queen Christina of Sweden.[13] Early in 1654 he also published works on conics and the arithmetical triangle. During this period he made the acquaintance of two important libertins: the Chevalier de Méré and Damien Mitton. These meetings are of the utmost importance, since it is the *libertins érudits* who are the purported audience for the *Pensées*.

However Pascal's worldly period is said to have come to an end following the famous *nuit de feu*, the night of 23 November 1654, which saw his second religious conversion. Luckily he left a record of the event in the *Mémorial*, a short description of his experience which was so important to him that he sewed it into the lining of his coat. The first four lines began:

> Feu.
> Dieu d'Abraham, Dieu d'Isaac, Dieu de Jacob,
> non des philosophes et des savants.
> Certitude, certitude, sentiment, joie, paix.

One of the most important points about the *Mémorial* is the implication that Pascal meant to leave his scientific and philosophical past behind: his God was now the God of true religion rather than one who served philosophers. However it seems that this intention was

[12] Herve Pasqua, *Blaise Pascal: penseur de la grâce*, Paris, 2000, p.20
[13] John Cruickshank, *Pascal: Pensées*, p.24

never fully carried through. Steinmann has noted that this night "did not produce any marked change in Pascal's outward life". He kept the same friends and appeared to carry on with his life in much the same way as before.[14]

He did decide to spend three weeks at Port-Royal-des-Champs in January 1655 and it is at this time that he came into contact with Sacy. Jacqueline had already taken holy orders and was able to convince both the spiritual directors at the convent and her brother that a mutual acquaintance could be good for all of them. Pascal therefore undertook to learn more about the form of piety which had seized his two sisters. This seems in keeping with the view of some critics that this first night was not the point of true conversion. Some, such as Miel, believe this came about more slowly after a certain amount of soul-searching.[15]

These encounters with Port-Royal were obviously some of the most important of Pascal's life and had a great influence on his future writings. The influence apparently worked both ways, since a work attributed to Arnauld, the *Réflexions d'un docteur de Sorbonne* – published without author, place of publication, or date – is said to show ideas attributable to Pascal.[16] Indeed, Goldmann has stated that if a work is not explicit enough, then the reader should look to an author's social situation for clues as to the real meaning. He believes that

> Il nous reste à savoir si le groupe...ne pourrait constituer une réalité qui nous permettrait de surmonter les difficultés rencontrées sur le plan du texte isolé ou rattaché uniquement à la biographie.[17]

For him, any work is "difficilement intelligible si on veut la comprendre uniquement", without recourse to "la personnalité de son auteur".[18] In this case, Pascal's interaction with various important Jansenist figures should play an important role in any interpretation of his work.

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[14] Jean Steinmann, *Pascal*, translated by Martin Turnell, London, 1965, p.85
[15] Jan Miel, *Pascal and Theology*, Baltimore; London, 1969, p.119
[16] See Le Guern's article, 'Sur une collaboration probable entre Pascal et Arnauld', *XVIIe siècle*, 173 (1991), pp.351-358
[17] Lucien Goldmann, *Le Dieu caché*, p.22
[18] Ibid, p.17

Goldmann is also well known for his Marxist interpretation of Pascal's work. Although he acknowledges the obvious differences between Marxism and Augustinianism – not least in the fact that the latter "existe indépendamment de toute volonté et de toute action humaine", whilst the former "parie sur une réalité que nous devons créer"[19] – he does see certain similarities between the two movements. He believes that "le fondement commun de l'épistémologie augustinienne, pascalienne et marxiste" is to "parier au départ sur le caractère significatif de l'histoire et cela veut dire...partir d'un acte de foi".[20] Thus it is the wager that brings together these disparate beliefs.

Goldmann also attempts to show that the tendency of some individuals to withdraw from society during this period was more the result of society than of an ideological belief. He states that the prevalent mood – "cette vision tragique" – of the time can be explained by the continued attack on the noblesse de robe during this period.[21] He believes that the Wars of Religion in the sixteenth century, and the increase in monarchical power in the seventeenth, led to the suppression of this social class, the affects of which were seen in the increasing tendency to withdraw from this society. He states that to understand "la naissance du jansénisme" it is necessary to look at the move towards absolutism.[22] Of course, these views have been hotly debated since Goldmann's work was first published, and his view that the Jansenist movement mainly consisted of members of this social group is now disputed. This argument is not sufficient to explain Pascal's own interest in the group's ideas, particularly since he himself did not withdraw from the world, but continued to participate in it.

However it is important that not all Jansenists were convinced of the nature of Pascal's conversion. Rebours, the spiritual director at Port-Royal, had doubts as to his sincerity. He questioned his refusal to renounce mathematics and physics, and believed that instead of showing so much interest in theology, he should humble himself and give himself over to

[19] Lucien Goldmann, *Le Dieu caché*, p.99
[20] Ibid, p.104
[21] Ibid, pp.117-119
[22] Ibid, p.120

prayer.[23] He warned against Pascal's proposal of "a scientific demonstration of religious truth".[24] The movement's distaste for human endeavours was emphasised by the fact that when Pascal's sister Jacqueline entered the convent, she was advised by Singlin and Mère Agnes to give up her poetry. It was better for her if she hid this particular talent.[25]

This version of events clashes with the story of Pascal's life as it was retold by Gilberte in the *Vie de Pascal*. Whilst this would be undoubtedly biased, it is nonetheless interesting to note what she thought about her brother's experiences. She claimed that he renounced his scientific work after his conversion and stated that his treatise on cycloids – produced after this date – was only composed when he was kept awake by a troublesome toothache. Despite her certainty on the matter, this suggestion has been refuted.[26] He remained interested in science and it is most probably in 1655 that he composed works such as *De l'esprit géométrique* – part of which aimed to discuss the art of persuasion or rhetoric[27] – a work which hardly seems suitable for somebody who has recently been converted to a strict form of piety. In 1658 he suggested several problems concerning geometry to the mathematicians of Europe. Evidently his interest in the sciences never waned.[28] Since Augustinianism had denounced the "sin of curiosity",[29] it is all the more interesting that Pascal continued with such works and experiments during this period. He is far from the only scientist who was also an advocate of religion; after his completion of the *Principia*, Sir Isaac Newton devoted his life to religious works.[30] However it was the nature of Pascal's chosen religious leanings which should have precluded the coexistence of science and theology in his case.

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[23] Jean Steinmann, *Pascal*, p.50
[24] David Wetsel, *L'Écriture et le Reste: The* Pensées *of Pascal in the Exegetical Tradition of Port-Royal*, Columbus, c1981, pp.18-19
[25] Jean Steinmann, *Pascal*, p.57
[26] Leszek Kolakowski, *God Owes us Nothing: A Brief Remark on Pascal's Religion and on the Spirit of Jansenism*, Chicago, 1995, p.158
[27] Erec Koch, 'Rhetorical Aesthetics and Rhetorical Theory in Pascal', *Papers on Seventeenth-Century French Literature*, 38 (1993), pp.151-170 (p.152)
[28] Thomas Harrington, 'La Notion de la simplicité chez Pascal', *XVIIe siècle*, 154 (1987), pp.25-37 (p.28)
[29] Leszek Kolakowski, *God Owes us Nothing*, p.184
[30] Francis J. Coleman, *Neither Angel nor Beast: The Life and Work of Blaise Pascal*, New York, 1986, p.3

It is therefore difficult to conclude whether Pascal's interest should be considered to lie predominantly with science or religion. It is often argued that in later life his work was centred on his religious beliefs. He is connected to the Jansenists through many of his works, not just the *Provinciales* and the *Pensées*. His undoubtedly theological work *Écrits sur la grâce* links him with the movement because it demonstrates his "full agreement with Jansenius' and Arnauld's theology of efficient grace".[31] Indeed Goldmann has stated that one need only read this work to convince oneself of the fact that Pascal "a été sans doute d'accord avec...les «Amis de Port-Royal»".[32] However, there seems to be little evidence as to when or why the work was written,[33] but it can be seen as Pascal's only work which comprehensively portrays his theological position.

In the first *écrit* he explains the difference between the Calvinist and Augustinian positions on the doctrine of grace. He explains that the Augustinians – and therefore by association we must presume that he also means the Jansenists – believe that man has existed in two states. Firstly, there is the prelapsarian state, when he was "juste et droit, sortant des mains de Dieu, duquel rien ne peut partir que pur, saint et parfait". The second state is that instituted after Adam's fall, when human nature was reduced "par le péché et la révolte du premier homme". This state is "abominable et détestable aux yeux de Dieu".[34] Pascal accepts Augustine's views on grace so wholeheartedly that he states that they cannot simply be considered "le sentiment des disciples de saint Augustin"; they are also the belief of the Church Fathers "et de toute la tradition et par conséquent de l'Eglise". Other views should be considered as "des égarements de l'esprit humain" (p.313).

In this *écrit* Pascal also provides his thoughts on the doctrine of predestination; he asks whether God really does feel "une volonté générale de sauver tous les hommes" (p.315). In answer, he concludes that it is necessary to point out that "par la suite de la tradition...tous les Docteurs en tous les temps ont établi comme une vérité constante que Dieu ne veut pas sauver tous les hommes" (p.315). The doctrine that sufficient grace is not given to all is not

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[31] Leszek Kolakowski, *God Owes us Nothing*, p.113
[32] Lucien Goldmann, *Le Dieu caché*, p.296
[33] Jan Miel, *Pascal and Theology*, Baltimore; London, 1969, p.64
[34] Blaise Pascal, *Œuvres complètes*, Présentation et notes de Louis Lafuma, Paris, 1963, p.312.

heretical "mais au contraire très catholique" (p.317). Of course this was a particularly contentious idea and was one of the reasons that the Jansenists had been denounced. He was clearly positioning himself on the side of the movement, which was particularly important during the bitter debates that raged during the 1650s.

Pascal explains in the *Deuxième écrit* that Augustine declared that God desired to save man only if he followed His commandments: He did not wish to save all men unconditionally. However, even before the Fall, Adam was unable to fulfil God's wishes "sans grâce de Dieu". Thus when he ate the apple, he was not doing anything contrary to his own nature.

Pascal also emphasises the fact that God gave Adam *sufficient* grace in his prelapsarian state, as this was all that was necessary. This was no longer possible after Adam's sin as his resultant concupiscence "a chatouillé et délecté sa volonté dans le mal". This sin was passed from him "à toute sa postérité, qui fut corrompue en lui" (p.317). From the time of the Fall, all men deserved "la mort éternelle et...la colère de Dieu". Thus, if some are saved, this is not through their own merit (p.318). These points are important in that they demonstrate Pascal's affinity with Jansenius. The Frenchman was undoubtedly drawing on ideas which are pre-eminent in the *Réformation de l'homme intérieur*. The concept that even in Eden Adam needed help because his nature was imperfect was prominent in the Dutchman's work. Whilst Pascal may not have read this treatise, he was evidently familiar with Jansenius' beliefs.

In the *Troisième écrit*, Pascal goes on to discuss the concept that the Just are always able to follow the Commandments. He states that there are two ways in which this concept is viewed and the difference between these views "n'est pas ici une distinction d'école; elle est solide et réelle" (p.319). The first is that which many see as the view of the Council of Trent – in which they are mistaken – and is the view that the Just always have "le pouvoir prochain d'accomplir les commandements dans l'instant suivant". This is the view of the Pelgians and one that the Church "a toujours combattue", even in the Council of Trent (pp.319-320). The second way that it can be viewed is that the Just man, "agissant comme juste et par un mouvement de charité, peut accomplir les commandements...par charité".

He criticises the Lutherans for declaring that even actions carried out by charity can be seen as sinful. Indeed, it is only through a state of charity that the Commandments can be fulfilled (p.320). Thus Trent denounced both the Lutherans and the Pelagians for their opposing views, either that the Commandments cannot be followed, even through charity, or that they can always be followed, even without the need for a state of charity. Thus, Pascal shows himself to be occupying the middle ground. He backs up his position by showing his beliefs to be those of Augustine. He states that Augustine showed that it is through the love of Christ that man can come to charity, and thus be able to follow the Commandments. This is the only possible position to take.

In this section Pascal also defends Augustine against those who have declared him to be inconsistent in his writings. He states that the reason for these differences is that "toutes nos bonnes actions ont deux sources: l'une, notre volonté, l'autre, la volonté de Dieu". In this way, when a man is saved it could either be said that it is because he wanted to be saved, or because God wanted to save him, since both statements are true. If one or the other had not wanted the man to be saved, then he would not have been. However, Pascal adds that

> encore que ces deux causes aient concouru à cet effet, il y a pourtant bien de la différence entre leur concours, la volonté de l'homme n'étant pas la cause de la volonté de Dieu (p.323).

However, God's grace helps mankind in his actions, and it is only through the grace of God that he acts well. Pascal's need to justify Augustine is important in that it underlines the importance of Jansenist beliefs – which rely heavily on the saint – in his own writings.

However, Pascal does not simply propound Augustine's views in this section of the work, he also puts forward some of his own thoughts. He states that as long as the just man remains just, he is always with God. This is because

> Dieu ne cesse point de donner ses secours à ceux qui ne cessent point de les demander. Mais aussi l'homme ne cesserait jamais de les demander, si Dieu ne cessait de lui donner la grâce efficace de les demander (pp.324-325).

He explains that "on peut être Catholique et Pélagien" by saying that it is in our power to change "notre volonté en mieux" (p.327). It is Pelagian to say that this power is within us, and Catholic to say that it comes from God. Once again, Pascal emphasises that nothing is possible without the aid of God.

This is also true when we consider the gift of grace, which allows the Just to "persévérer très invinciblement". They continue in this life until this grace is removed, when their "volonté deviendrait méchante" (p.328). However, God "ne laisse jamais ceux qui la prient". Indeed, God gives such men "toujours les moyens nécessaires à leur salut, s'ils les lui demandent sincèrement" (p.329). Without God's aid, men cannot persevere in their goodness, but return to their natural baseness. Adam's sinfulness means that God is not "obligé de donner ses secours maintenant" and "nul n'a sujet de se plaindre s'il ne les reçoit pas" (p.335).

In the fourth and final *écrit* Pascal explores the meaning of the Council of Trent's proclamation that "les commandements ne sont pas impossibles aux justes" (p.335). Once again he highlights the fact that to do anything, man must have divine help. To say that the Just can always fulfil the commandments is like saying that a prince can become king: "il n'est pas impossible qu'un prince du sang ne soit roi, et cependant il n'est pas toujours au plein pouvoir des princes du sang de l'être" (p.336). Thus it is true to say that the Just are able to follow the commandments, whilst accepting that there will be some who at times will not. To say that the commandments are always impossible to the Just is a Lutheran error, which the Council was forced to combat (pp.336-337).

The Council also attacked the Pelagian concept that "les Justes aient le pouvoir de persévérer sans la grace", even though this is a belief which is no longer current (p.337). Pascal also mentions the Councils of Orange and Valence, which condemned the belief that

God "prédestine les hommes aux mauvaises actions". These councils also denounced beliefs that were no longer current, thus the Council of Trent was perfectly correct in also doing so (p.338). He asserts that the Early Church Fathers, and Trent, "ont eu une obligation" to oppose "ces sentiments impies" (p.340). Like the Jansenists, Pascal feels that it is important to highlight and to denounce heresy, so that the Church could regain its former glory.

This work is of the utmost importance to any study of Pascal; it demonstrates that he was moved by some of the same doctrinal discussions as the Jansenists. It may also give an indication of what may have been left out of his other, less theological, works. For Kolakowski this is Pascal's only theological treatise;[35] here he is the exponent of a creed which follows "the already established Jansenist doctrine". The difference is that Pascal's work is "concise...and less involved in the polemical context" than that of Arnauld.[36] Pascal's purpose in writing the work is obviously to give other Catholics the benefit of his views on the complicated doctrine of grace; his aim in writing is theological rather than specifically literary. Here, we gain a true glimpse of Pascal's theological beliefs, which are undoubtedly Augustinian in origin. However, this does not mean that his other works were necessarily Jansenist in nature: Cruickshank believes that in other works Pascal wrote "as a mathematician, not a theologian".[37]

Another of Pascal's works that links him with Port-Royal is the *Entretien avec M. de Sacy sur Epictète et Montaigne*. This is a short work which was put together by Sacy's secretary Fontaine in the 1690s. This work depicts a supposed interview between Pascal and Sacy during Pascal's visits to Port-Royal. Doubt has been cast upon the true historical nature of the work.[38] It has also been suggested that rather than portraying one single interview between the two men, the *Entretien* is in fact an amalgam of several interviews.[39] It is also important because it demonstrates the author's continued interest in philosophy: he appears reluctant to reject the discipline entirely.

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[35] Leszek Kolakowski, *God Owes us Nothing*, p.113
[36] Ibid
[37] John Cruickshank, *Pascal: Pensées*, p.9
[38] David Wetsel, *L'Écriture et le Reste*, p.9
[39] Ibid, p.17

Right from the start of the work, the narrator is at pains to show how impressed Sacy was with Pascal. He found all that he said "fort juste", but none of it was "de nouveau" since it could be found in the works of Saint Augustine.[40] The two apparently begin discussing philosophy because Sacy liked to talk to each individual about his own subject, thus "il crut...devoir mettre M. Pascal sur son fonds, de lui parler des lectures de philosophie dont il s'occupait le plus" (p.292). Since Pascal states that the authors he prefers to read are Montaigne and Epictetus, and Sacy finds it unlikely that he will ever read such works, he asks Pascal to elaborate.

Pascal begins with Epictetus, and states that he believed that God "gouverne tout avec justice". Thus, anything that happens to us, we should accept with graciousness. Furthermore, he advised, "ayez tous les jours devant les yeux la mort et les maux qui semblent les plus insupportables et jamais vous ne penserez rien de bas". He believed that man should be "humble" and that his desire should be "de reconnaître la volonté de Dieu et de la suivre".

However, although Epictetus should be admired, he was far from being faultless. For example, he claimed that "Dieu a donné à l'homme les moyens de s'acquitter de toutes ses obligations" and that man should search for happiness in things within his own power. All his errors led him further away from the truth: he even thought that "l'âme est une portion de la substance divine" and that "on peut se tuer quand on est si persécuté qu'on doit croire que Dieu appelle" (p.293).

Pascal then moves on to Montaigne, who he notes "fait profession de la religion catholique". Pascal states that "il met toutes choses dans un doute universel". In fact, he shows himself to be "pur pyrrhonien" and it is on this principle that "roulent tous ses discours et tous ses *Essais*". He destroys all that is "certain parmi les hommes" and mocks "toutes les assurances" (p.293). He asks whether "l'âme connaît quelque chose; si elle se connaît elle-même". He questions everything, from the sciences to "l'histoire...la

[40] Blaise Pascal, *Œuvres complètes*, p.292

politique...la morale". He "gourmande si fortement et si cruellement la raison dénuée de la foi".

It is therefore unsurprising that Sacy is shocked by Pascal's account of Montaigne: he believes himself to "vivre dans un nouveau pays et entendre une nouvelle langue" (p.294) in hearing these beliefs. In the past, such philosophers were forgiven for putting "tout dans le doute", but Montaigne cannot be forgiven because by putting forward such ideas he is "renouvelant une doctrine qui passe maintenant aux Chrétiens pour une folie". Sacy explains that Pascal has been lucky because "Dieu a répandu dans [son] cœur d'autres...attraits que ceux que vous trouviez dans Montaigne" (p.295).

After his study of the two philosophers, Pascal concludes that Sacy has made him see "le peu d'utilité que les Chrétiens peuvent retirer de ces études philosophiques". He believes that "la source des erreurs" of these two philosophies is that they do not understand the difference in man's nature now and at his creation. Thus one recognises "quelques traces de sa première grandeur" whilst ignoring man's current corruption. The other shows "la misère présente" without noting man's "première dignité". These are ideas which are of great importance in the *Pensées*. If Pascal did develop these beliefs during early meetings with Sacy, before his connections with the Jansenists were well established, this suggests that the movement did indeed influence his thought. It is certainly true that Pascal remained in close contact with the *solitaires*, so he must have been impressed and moved by their strict form of piety.

Thus Pascal suggests that Montaigne and Epictetus should be admired in certain respects. No matter what their beliefs, Pascal shows that these men have the power to remain "fermement et durablement dans l'esprit de leur lecteur", something for which they can only be admired.[41] This is obviously an important factor to him and influenced his own style of writing. Magnard asserts that Pascal's preference for Montaigne over Epictetus is emphasised by the fact that "l'exposé relatif à Montaigne est beaucoup plus long que celui

[41] Laurent Thirouin, 'Le défaut d'une droite méthode', *Littératures classiques*, 20 – supplément (1994), pp.7-21 (p.8)

qui est consacré à Epictète".[42] The Frenchman was obviously much more important for his countryman than any other philosopher.

However Pascal's eventual conclusion is that philosophy is no substitute for religion. As Goldmann has suggested, he portrays "les positions chrétiennes en les opposant aux positions unilatérales du scepticisme et du dogmatisme".[43] He criticises Montaigne and Epictetus for relying too heavily upon man's innate powers without reference to God. This would also have been the conclusion of the Jansenists: Pascal's beliefs were already moving toward those of his new friends. Sellier has commented that the work opposes the theologian Sacy, a man "tout imprégné des *Confessions*", and Pascal who, despite his reputation as a great scientist, is "extrêmement estimable en ce que, n'ayant point lu les Pères de l'Eglise, il avait de lui-même, par la pénétration de son esprit, trouvé les mêmes vérités, qu'ils avaient trouvées",[44] a view that was certainly held by some Jansenists.

In putting the work together, Sacy's secretary evidently wished to demonstrate that a man such as Pascal, a figure well known in scientific circles as well as literary ones, could be touched by God in such a manner that he could come to find Him without the theological training received by more typical theologians. Even though Pascal demonstrates his appreciation of the two philosophers, he prefers religion. Thus the work could be acceptable to the Jansenist movement: although Pascal admired certain philosophers, he asserted the superiority of the Christian religion.[45] In addition, the *Entretien* was put together towards the end of the century, when Jansenist views of acceptable works had evidently changed. By this point, it was possible for the group to publish treatises that were not strictly theological in nature without incurring the displeasure of other members of the movement.

Pascal's alliance with the movement was made certain through the *Lettres Provinciales*. The work is important because it shows that the use of rhetoric can be allied with the

[42] Pierre Magnard, 'Pascal censeur de Montaigne', *XVIIe siècle*, 185 (1994), pp.615-638 (p.617)
[43] Lucien Goldmann, *Le Dieu caché*, p.320
[44] Philippe Sellier, *Port-Royal et la littérature, v.I*, Paris, 1999, p.221
[45] It should be remembered that Augustine himself had suggested the idea that of all early philosophers, Plato alone was to be admired, since he had asserted the possibility of one true force of good.

promotion of a particular doctrinal viewpoint. The letters have been described as a "classic of French literature almost since they were printed",[46] but also form an important part of the religious debate of the seventeenth century. Although the work intended to defend a widely criticised group, it attracted its own denunciation: the *Provinciales* were eventually placed on the Index and were publicly burnt.[47]

They were initially composed to defend Arnauld, who had been working to defend Jansenius and his followers against accusations of heresy. However he had not been wholly successful, and his own works – the *Lettre à une personne de condition* and the *Seconde lettre à un duc et pair* – were under review by the Sorbonne with a view to condemnation. Arnauld had planned to make his own defence, but when he read his proposed work to the *solitaires* he failed to receive "aucun applaudissement".[48] Apparently lacking in style and "virtually incapable of wit",[49] his work was deemed unsuitable. With the help of Arnauld and Nicole, Pascal set about writing a more suitable defence.[50]

Since Pascal composed the work solely to defend the Jansenist movement, can the *Provinciales* be viewed as anything other than a Jansenist work? Has Pascal composed a theological text, thus allying both Jansenism and literature? In truth these are difficult questions, not least because in certain senses it is hard to view him as a true theologian. Although he may not have been as ignorant of Jansenist doctrine as critics have suggested in the past,[51] Pascal was far from a learned docteur of theology and many of the citations of religious works were gathered by other Jansenists.[52] This is emphasised by the fact that throughout the work the author does not "elucidate a coherent theological position", but rather attacks "an incoherent one".[53] In other words, his aim was not to put forward his own doctrinal position, but to criticise the Jesuit stance. Moreover Cahné asserts that as a

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[46] Leszek Kolakowski, *God Owes us Nothing*, p.61
[47] John Barker, *Strange Contrarieties: Pascal in England During the Age of Reason*, Montreal; London, 1975, p.2
[48] Patricia Topliss, *The Rhetoric of Pascal: A Study of his Art of Persuasion in the* Provinciales *and the* Pensées, Leicester, 1966, p.36
[49] Walter E. Rex, *Pascal's Provincial Letters: An Introduction*, London, 1977, p.66
[50] Michel Le Guern, 'Sur une collaboration probable entre Pascal et Arnauld', p.351
[51] Philippe Sellier, *Port-Royal et la littérature,v.I*, p.249
[52] Walter E. Rex, *Pascal's Provincial Letters*, p.63
[53] Robert J. Nelson, *Pascal: Adversary and Advocate*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1981, p.168

mathematician and a mystical poet Pascal "n'a pas une nature qui le porte spontanément aux subtilités de la dispute théologique".[54] This is not to say that he did not fully comprehend the issues, as without this understanding he could not have defended the movement as he did.

Pascal's advocacy of the Jansenists' beliefs becomes progressively stronger throughout the letters. In fact the work can be seen as dualistic: the first ten *Provinciales* are predominantly literary, whilst the remainder are predominantly theological. This observation has been emphasised by Le Guern, who states that

> Les dix premières lettres, contrairement aux suivantes, font une place à la fiction. Elles se rattachent au genre littéraire du dialogue, dans la mesure où elles présentent des propos fictivement énoncés par des locateurs fictifs.[55]

As the work progresses, the reader "voit s'atténuer progressivement le caractère de fiction: la neutralité du narrateur glisse vers l'indignation". By the end of the eleventh letter "on sort totalement de la fiction" (p.10). In addition Parish has asserted that the letters

> can be described in a variety of numerical patterns: they can be seen as eighteen quasi-independent pieces; as two quite distinct series, one satirical, one direct, with the break coming at the eleventh letter; or as divisible in other ways within the arbitrarily abandoned work seen as an entity.[56]

He also adds that the reader cannot presume that Pascal "envisaged the work as a series, or what the direction would ultimately be".[57] This last point is most interesting, since it suggests the possibility that the form taken in the later letters was not necessarily planned by the author in the beginning. He may not have initially intended the vociferous defence of the Jansenist movement which is evident in the second half of the work.

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[54] Pierre A. Cahné, *Pascal ou le risque de l'espérance*, Paris, 1981, p.45
[55] Blaise Pascal, *Les Provinciales*, Michel le Guern (ed), no place, 1987, p.10
[56] Richard Parish, *Pascal's* Lettres Provinciales*: A Study in Polemic*, Oxford, 1989, p.1
[57] Ibid, p.2

One thing that is certain is that, from the beginning of the first *Provinciale*, Pascal's literary genius is both evident and undisputed. With great irony he is able to defend the Jansenists against what he depicts as a petty attack. He immediately belittles the Sorbonne and declares that up until this point he had believed that "le sujet des disputes de Sorbonne était bien important, et d'une extrême conséquence pour la religion".[58] Having learnt of the faculty's consideration of Arnauld, he can no longer believe this: the arguments they present against him are facile. His literary persona is depicted as ignorant of theological matters, which allows Pascal both to explain the discussions in simple terms, and also to depict the theologians of the Sorbonne to be of little worth. If he, an ordinary man, can see that the arguments against Arnauld are ridiculous, then they must be all the more unnecessary and obtuse when emanating from trained scholars.

He mocks these doctors for refusing to point out the five propositions in the work of Jansenius, despite the fact that this would have settled all such arguments (p.372). The implication is that they will not do so simply because they are unable to. The members of the Sorbonne have condemned Arnauld "sans vouloir examiner si ce qu'il avait dit était vrai ou faux", even though the *Augustinus* "n'est pas si rare ni si gros que je ne le pusse lire tout entier pour m'en éclaircir, sans en consulter la Sorbonne" (p.372). The fact that he is defending both Arnauld and the five propositions suggests that he afforded both of these some level of support.

In order to explain to the reader the true nature of the arguments, Pascal's narrator describes how he has taken varying advice on the true doctrinal issues at stake. He believes that he has become a "grand théologien en peu de temps" (p.372). This is possible because anyone can become an expert: the issues being dealt with are hardly complex. Pascal aims to humiliate his targets even further by using the imaginary figure of Monsieur N. to ridicule their arguments. The narrator asks him if he believes that grace is given to all or only to the elect. The doctor's reply is that "ce n'était pas là le point". Even some of his colleagues assert that grace is only given to the few, whilst it was stated "en pleine Sorbonne" that the whole issue was problematic. As evidence, the docteur quotes Saint Augustine, who in the

[58] Blaise Pascal, *Les Provinciales*, in *Œuvres complètes*, p.371

course of his *Letters* declared that "la grâce n'est pas donnée à tous les hommes" (p.372). Thus Pascal indicates to the reader that there was no justification for Arnauld's condemnation on this point.

The narrator then turns to a further point of condemnation: that God's grace is efficacious and irresistible. When asked if he would condemn such a concept himself, the docteur replies, "vous n'y entendez rien...ce n'est pas là une hérésie; c'est une opinion orthodoxe: tous les Thomistes la tiennent" (p.372). Arnauld evidently should not have been condemned on this point either, and the reader is left asking the very same question that the narrator then poses to the docteur: "en quoi consistait donc l'hérésie de la proposition de M. Arnauld"? (p.372) The answer is simply that the Jansenist would not admit, in the same sense as the doctor, that the elect possess the power to fulfil all of God's commandments. This distinction is obviously facile: the doctor's arguments are so pointless that they have been reduced to a quibble over words.

Pascal goes on to suggest that the Jansenists should not even be condemned on this point. He introduces a Jansenist figure who explains to the narrator that the Just are always able to obey God's commandments: indeed this is "un sentiment catholique" (p.373). When this evidence is presented to the doctor, he replies that to understand what is meant by these arguments, "il faut être théologien". The distinction between the views of the two parties is so subtle that even they have difficulty in defining it themselves, so an ordinary citizen such as the narrator would have "trop de difficulté à l'entendre" (p.373). He now claims that he does not dispute that the Jansenists believe man has the power to fulfil the Commandments, but rather that it is their belief in "le pouvoir prochain" to which he objects. The fact that Pascal has the doctor change his mind on what constitutes his objection merely serves to highlight the poor nature of his arguments. Furthermore he will not explain what he means by "pouvoir prochain" but instead sends the narrator back to the Jansenist for enlightenment (p.373). The reader infers from this that the docteur himself did not understand the argument, so was unable to comment clearly.

The narrator eventually comes to the conclusion that various religious groups have different interpretations of "pouvoir prochain", so any condemnation of Arnauld would not establish peace, as arguments would not cease (p.374). Pascal underlines what he sees as the absurdity of the whole situation by having his narrator comment that although the doctrine of "pouvoir prochain" is to be found neither in the Scriptures nor in any of the Church Fathers, and no Pope or ecumenical council has ever pronounced on it, a man is pronounced a heretic if his view should differ from that of the doctors at the Sorbonne (p.375). The arguments have been reduced to the interpretation of individual words, something which does the Jesuits no credit. However it could be argued that the Jansenists are no better in this respect and Pascal certainly does nothing to combat this idea.

Thus Pascal had demonstrated in this first letter that the condemnation of Arnauld had little true basis in reality. This was a great achievement in itself: despite the complexity of the doctrines, he was able to bring them to a level which all of polite society could understand. He did this with great style, using his wit rather than simple and outright denunciation of those who denounce Jansenism. This contrasts with the writings of other Jansenists who preferred to use a more direct method of condemnation. They did not aim to provide aesthetic pleasure in addition to religious instruction.

It is interesting to note that the second half of this letter has much in common with a work generally attributed to Nicole, also defending Arnauld against censure.[59] Moles explains that Nicole has his "dreary layman" visit two Jesuits in order to discuss the debate on grace through which Arnauld was condemned. However, unlike Pascal's work, Nicole's effort is "larded with stiff theological antithesis"; Pascal takes the situation provided by the Jansenist and "breathes kindling life into Nicole's dummy theologians".[60] This is further evidence of Pascal's ability to give literary vivacity to theological issues.

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[59] Roger Duchêne, *L'imposture littéraire dans les* Provinciales *de Pascal, Deuxième édition, revue et augmentée, suivie des actes du colloque tenu à Marseille le 10 mars 1984*, Aix-en-Provence, 1985, p.33

[60] Elizabeth Moles, 'Pascal's Faint Praise of Montaigne: Catch 22', *Seventeenth-Century French Studies*, 6 (1984), pp. 136-150 (p.137)

Pascal's ploy was so successful that he decided to continue the letters. In the second *Provinciale* he debates the nature of sufficient grace. He also brings in the "nouveaux Thomistes", a group whom he ridicules as compromising its principles in order to side with the Jesuits. The nouveaux Thomistes – in other words, the Dominicans – agree with the Jesuits in that they admit to the existence of sufficient grace. The difference lies in the fact that the Dominicans also teach that "les hommes n'agissent jamais avec cette seule grâce". Instead, in order to make man act, it is necessary that "Dieu leur donne une *grâce efficace* qui détermine réellement leur volonté à l'action, et laquelle Dieu ne donne pas à tous" (p.375). Pascal shows that the main difference between the Jansenists and the Dominicans is that the latter claim to believe in sufficient grace, whilst asserting that it has no real power without the more powerful efficient grace. The narrator emphasises the bizarre nature of this situation by commenting that "ainsi ils sont conformes aux Jésuites par un terme qui n'a pas de sens...et conformes aux Jansénistes dans la substance de la chose" (p.375).

Pascal also highlights the differences between the Jesuits and the traditions of the Catholic Church. He explains that Saint Augustine and his followers believed that the nature of man changed after the Fall when, despite God's own will, sufficient grace was destroyed. It is only the Jesuits who have insisted on asserting otherwise (p.377). This idea of the destruction of sufficient grace was also emphasised by Jansenius in his *Réformation de l'homme intérieur*, where he showed that only efficient grace could change man's nature after Adam's sin.

Pascal's narrator then visits a Dominican Father in order to illuminate the movement's beliefs. It is evident from the outset of the meeting that he wishes to undermine these beliefs. The Dominican declares that the Jesuits were forced to adapt their principles quickly after the rise of Luther and his followers because they saw the "peu de lumières" which the people had to discern heresies for themselves (p.378). Since the assertions of the Jesuits had become so popular, the Dominicans could do nothing else but accept their statements on sufficient grace. This highlights the fallibility of both movements at once: the Jesuits are to be condemned for adapting their doctrines in order to attract more followers,

whilst the Dominicans are to be criticised for their failure to uphold their true belief in the face of criticism. Pascal has demonstrated that neither movement is particularly fit to lead the faithful and they should certainly not be criticising others for holding more pure and traditional beliefs. Religion is concerned with the saving of souls and the worship of God, neither of which can be carried out particularly well if the rules are changed merely to suit modern society. This is a concept that is also underlined by Arnauld in *De la fréquente communion.*

The third *Provinciale* appeared at the beginning of February 1656, by which point Arnauld had already been condemned by the Sorbonne. The scale of the condemnation gave the Jansenists some hope: whilst he had been denounced by 127 members, 71 had voted in his favour, whilst 15 had abstained.[61] The condemnation was not as total as the Jesuits would have wished and it is certainly undermined at the beginning of this latest letter. The narrator declares that he was greatly surprised by the condemnation, as he only thought that the Sorbonne carried out such actions against "les plus horribles hérésies du monde" (p.379). Many accusations have been made against the Jansenists, including "les factions, les erreurs, les schismes, les attentats". Worse still, they have been accused of heresy and of both denying transubstantiation and renouncing Jesus and the Scriptures (p.379). Pascal believes that the condemnation of such concepts within the work of Arnauld is grossly unfair: those chosen to examine it are "ses plus déclarés ennemis" (p.380). Furthermore in what way can the exposition of such views be condemned when he references them to Saint Augustine?

Arnauld's accusers are ridiculed further as the narrator points out that the Jesuits have been unable to explain how such an assertion should contravene orthodox belief. Instead they have only declared that it is "téméraire, impie, blasphématoire, frappée d'anathème et hérétique" (p.380). The condemnation itself is to be despised as it only consisted of "une partie de la Sorbonne, et non pas de tout le corps". The faculty also failed to explain exactly what it was denouncing (p.381). The only conclusion to which the narrator can come is that the supposition is not heretical in itself but rather "elle n'est mauvaise que dans la *Seconde*

[61] Albert Bayet, *Les Provinciales de Pascal*, Paris, 1946, p.25

Lettre de M. Arnauld" (p.382). Saint Augustine's beliefs have been rendered "une nouveauté insupportable", whilst the whole affair is a dispute for theologians and not "de théologie" (p.382). Theology should not be brought down to the level of man. He is too fallible and corrupt to understand these matters without the aid of God.

Duchêne has commented that the content of these first letters "est tout entier subordonné au besoin de les faire lire le plus largement possible".[62] It is fair to say that the work is predominantly literary at this point. Pascal has not put forward his arguments in a dogmatic way, and rather than expounding any particular doctrinal principles, he has merely provided a depiction of the situation surrounding the Sorbonne's condemnation of Arnauld. However the tone of the work does alter slightly after this point. From the fourth letter, more of these doctrinal principles are asserted, and the characters invented by Pascal are utilised less and less. Now that Pascal has gained society's interest, he can change the emphasis slightly.

It is hardly surprising that after dealing with Arnauld's condemnation Pascal should have chosen the Jansenists' bitter rivals as his target. The Jesuits were at the forefront of criticism against the movement, and whilst they may have had difficulty in challenging the authority of Augustine, they certainly did not fail to emphasise the similarity between Jansenism and Calvinism.[63] Pascal thus had little reason to spare the movement from his caustic remarks. Indeed the depiction of their casuistry has been described as the "most brilliant achievement" in Pascal's literary career.[64] This attack is again achieved through the use of fictitious characters, who help to outline the relevant beliefs.

Pascal uses this opportunity to criticise the Jesuit view of divine grace. The narrator visits a Jesuit priest, taking his Jansenist friend along with him. There the Jesuit explains his movement's doctrine of "la grâce actuelle", which he defines as "une inspiration de Dieu par laquelle il nous fait connaître sa volonté". This grace is given to all men (p.382). The Jesuits also believe that an action "ne peut être imputée à péché, si Dieu ne nous donne, avant que de la commettre, la connaissance du mal qui y est, et une inspiration qui nous

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[62] Roger Duchêne, *L'imposture littéraire dans les* Provinciales *de Pascal*, Deuxième édition, p.8
[63] Leszek Kolakowski, *God Owes us Nothing*, p.5
[64] Walter E. Rex, *Pascal's Provincial Letters*, p.57

excite à l'éviter" (p.382). In other words, if we do not know that an action is a sin before we commit it, then it is not actually a sin. This assertion is evidently intended to absolve the heathens in the Americas and China, where the Jesuits were carrying out missionary expeditions. These people had never heard the word of God, thus their past actions should not be seen as sinful. This claim is put forward by the narrator to demonstrate immediately the lax morality of the Jesuit movement. They are shown to be changing the principles of religion simply to relax the level of morality necessary to a Christian life.

The Jansenist protests against this outrageous belief in the most vehement terms, declaring that "jamais les Pères, les Papes, les Conciles, ni l'Écriture, ni aucun livre de piété, même dans ces derniers temps, n'ont parlé de cette sorte" (p.383). This statement is important in that it demonstrates the gulf between the Jesuit and Jansenist movements. The Jansenist, through his use of the phrase "même dans ces derniers temps", asserts his belief that modern religion is in a poor state.[65] Thus it is difficult to believe that anyone could make such an assertion, even though religion finds itself in such a situation. Despite the fact that such beliefs have been proffered in a work by the Jesuit Bauny, it is also a doctrine which has been condemned both "à Rome, et par les évêques de France" (p.383).

The narrator explains to the Jesuit that "les autres apprennent à guérir les âmes par des austérités pénibles: mais vous montrez que celles qu'on aurait crues le plus désespérément malades se portent bien" (p.384). These lax assertions are condemned by biblical proof. It is written that God allowed the Gentiles to sin and err without knowing His word, whilst Saint Paul believed himself to be "le premier des pécheurs" because of an action he committed "par ignorance, et avec zèle". Finally Saint Augustine and the other early Church Fathers had also emphasised the fact that it was not impossible to sin if you were unaware of "la justice" (p.385).

This condemnation continues unabated in the fifth *Provinciale* where the Jesuits are condemned because of their false pride. They believe "qu'il est utile et comme nécessaire

[65] This was a belief held widely by the Jansenists and their followers, who believed that it was necessary to return to the purity of the Early Church.

au bien de la religion que leur crédit s'étende partout, et qu'ils gouvernent toutes les consciences" (p.387). This is a harsh condemnation indeed, since the Jesuits are portrayed as seeking power rather than wishing to be true religious leaders, whilst their presence within the Church is something to be regretted. The Jansenist character speaks of the Jesuits with "beaucoup de douleur" since their actions pain him. Pascal uses the Jesuits' beliefs to demonstrate their laxity. They have stated that "vous n'êtes point obligé à jeûner", whilst the Jesuit Escobar had asserted that there is no point fasting if the action prevents you from sleeping (pp.388-389). Like Arnauld in his work on communion, Pascal criticises the Jesuits for changing their beliefs in order to make the burden on the faithful less onerous.

Pascal also condemns the new doctrine of probable opinions, the "fondement et l'ABC" of all Jesuit morality. An opinion is probable, we are told, when it is founded "sur des raisons de quelque considération". Thus it is possible that an opinion can be considered probable if it is held merely by one "seul docteur fort grave". This is because a man who studies carefully will only be attracted by something "bonne et suffisante" (p.390). This assertion is evidently ludicrous, but the Jesuit attempts to defend his claim by stating that the Church Fathers were all well and good in their day, being adapted to the type of morality necessary at that time, but their doctrine is "trop éloigné pour celle du nôtre". Pascal affirms that this claim has been made in Jesuit writings by quoting the Jesuit Cellot, a man who asserted that "les nouveaux casuistes sont préférables aux anciens Pères, quoiqu'ils fussent plus proches des apôtres" (p.391).

In the sixth *Provinciale* Pascal introduces the concept of *droit* and *fait*, whereby the Church has the right to comment on matters of faith, but may be unable to comment on the fact that a certain doctrine is contained within any given work. Yet rather than referring to the Jansenists, he is here depicting a Jesuit belief, thereby demonstrating the group's hypocrisy. The Jesuit Diana had explained that although three Popes may have disagreed with his beliefs, his own assertions were also probable. He had declared that the Pope may have condemned him – as head of the Church, this is his prerogative – but he was unable to deny the probability of the Jesuit's assertions (p.393). The narrator's Jesuit interlocutor defends this principle by explaining that modern men are "tellement corrompus" that they will no

longer go to religion; thus religion must go to them. He explains that the "dessein capital" of the Jesuits is to "ne pas désespérer le monde" (p.394). The fact that Pascal condemns the introduction of new doctrines in order to attract more followers puts him firmly on the side of Arnauld, who had also condemned this in *De la fréquente communion.*

With each *Provinciale* the criticism of the Jesuits intensifies. In the next letter Pascal highlights the immorality of the advice given by this group. The movement tries to "mettre en pratique [leur] méthode de diriger l'intention" to find a permissible end for every action. This allows the Jesuits to correct the vice "par la pureté de la fin" (p.397). Therefore it is not a sin to duel if the purpose is to defend your honour, a doctrine which had been backed up by Jesuit writers such as Reginaldus, Lessius and Escobar (p.398). These men had also asserted that it is permissible to kill a man who has hit you as long as the motivation is not hatred or vengeance, but defence of one's honour. The Jesuit Baldelle even stated that it is possible to kill a man who has called you a liar "si on ne peut le réprimer autrement" (p.399). In order to justify these excesses Pascal's Jesuit figure states that the movement does not advocate such actions on all occasions. However Pascal still ridicules him because, rather than denouncing murder because such an action is forbidden by God, he declares that it is not advisable since if everyone acted in this way one "dépeuplerait un état en moins de rien, si on en tuait tous les médisants" (p.400).

Some of the harshest condemnations of the Jesuits appear in the ninth *Provinciale*, where Pascal highlights the extent of the movement's lax morality through his portrayal of their claims on salvation. His Jesuit figure describes a colleague's book, *Le Paradis ouvert à Philagle, par cent dévotions à la Mère de Dieu, aisées à pratiquer.* He depicts various "clefs du ciel", which he claims will open the doors of Heaven for any Christian who follows them (p.408). These devotions are extremely easy to follow, and include such actions as "saluer la sainte Vierge...prononcer souvent le nom de Marie...dire tous les jours l'Ave Maria en l'honneur du cœur de Marie". In contradiction to stricter Christian belief, it is not necessary to give one's heart to God, as it is "trop attaché au monde". Through the medium of his narrator, Pascal demonstrates the dire nature of such beliefs: he states "qu'il n'y aura personne de damné après cela".

However as if such assertions were not surprising enough, the Jesuit declares that it is difficult for people to remember to say the *bonjour* and *bonsoir* every day, so instead they may wear "un chapelet au bras en forme de bracelet, ou de porter sur soi un rosaire, ou bien une image de la Vierge" (p.408). The narrator shows his – and by insinuation, Pascal's – disgust with this doctrine by commenting that it is better to undergo a conversion with the aid of God's grace than to rely on such supposed devotions. However the Jesuit rejects this, and he states that it does not matter "par où nous entrions dans le Paradis, moyennant que nous y entrions" (p.408). In order to protect himself against criticisms that he is not portraying true Jesuit doctrines, Pascal has his casuist add that there exists "un ordre" within the Society which vets all Jesuit works, so that nothing can be published by a Jesuit unless it is approved by his superiors (p.409).

The Jesuit figure claims that some people turn away from devotion because they do not fully understand what it actually is. Le Moyne had written a work claiming that some religious leaders propagated an unfortunate view of devotion, associating it not just with solitude, but also with "la douleur et le travail" (p.409). When the narrator interjects by declaring that there have been saints who have led very austere lives, the Jesuit explains that le Moyne had countered this by asserting that some people are made up of a "complexion plus heureuse" than others: they are simply better suited to the practice. It is not the saints' piety which enabled them to lead a more austere life, but rather their love of retreat and solitude. Such figures are even to be criticised for their withdrawal from society since on public holidays they retreat "parmi les morts" rather than participating with everybody else. These devotions are merely a sign of an "esprit faible et sauvage, qui n'a pas les affections honnêtes et naturelles qu'il devrait avoir" (p.409). This was obviously the kind of life led by many Jansenists, particularly the nuns and *solitaires*. Pascal wished to defend this way of life, even though he was not necessarily leading such a life himself.

In the tenth *Provinciale* Pascal turns to the process of confession. The Jesuit claims that the "adoucissement de la Confession" is the best way to attract people to his movement. The group is attempting to render the confession "aussi aisée qu'elle était difficile autrefois" (p.413). Some may have difficulty in confessing for a variety of reasons including

> la honte de confesser certains péchés, le soin d'en exprimer les circonstances, la pénitence qu'il en faut faire, la résolution de n'y plus tomber, la fuite des occasions prochaines qui y engagent, et le regret de les avoir commis (p.413).

Whilst the reader may presume that these are necessary parts of the confession, in that they surely act to persuade the penitent to avoid sin in the future, the Jesuit does not agree. Escobar and Suarez had suggested that it is necessary to keep two confessors, one for "les péchés mortels", and another for "les véniels", thereby allowing the individual to retain the prestige he may hold with his main priest (p.413). Escobar had also suggested that if the penitent expresses the wish to give recompense for his sins in purgatory rather than in this life, then he should only be given a penance "bien légère".

Pascal's outrage at such a doctrine is again portrayed through the medium of his narrator, who wishes to know if the penitent is worthy of forgiveness if he "ne veut rien faire de pénible pour expier ses offenses". He asserts that "les saints Pères, les Docteurs et les Conciles sont d'accord...que la pénitence...doit être véritable, constante, courageuse, et non pas lâche et endormie" (p.415). Such ideas are heavily indebted to Arnauld's work, *De la fréquente communion*, where he laid much emphasis on the need for proper repentance before the taking of Communion. However the Jesuit reply to this is that "l'ancienne Église...est maintenant si peu de saison". Instead of the rigorous exigencies of the early Church, all sins should be now forgiven (p.415). This is exactly the stance which Arnauld wished to combat in his work, and his influence on Pascal is evident. He too denounces the idea that confession should be made easier.

The conclusion of this tenth *Provinciale* is a turning point in Pascal's work: until this point he has addressed the letters to his friend, the *provincial* of the title. In the later letters he no longer employs this ruse, instead addressing the letters to the Jesuits themselves. This is of the utmost importance and signals an adjustment of style in the work. Pascal abandons his use of comedy and turns instead to a harsh denunciation of the Jesuits' lax morality. He no longer employs his narrator to speak for him, whilst the fictional characters are dispensed with as the author addresses his target directly. It is an important point that this move is

seen to have rendered these *Provinciales* less interesting as literature.[66] Instead of comedy and wit the author wishes to treat his doctrinal issues with a more serious attitude. Parish has noted that the first ten letters are closer to the *Pensées* in purpose, since they contain "a strong apologetic undercurrent". This motivation is reinforced for in *Pensée* 287 (Lafuma edition): "Ainsi notre religion est divine dans l'Evangile, les apôtres et la tradition, mais elle est ridicule dans ceux qui la traitent mal".[67]

After this point Pascal also deals with the personal criticisms that he had received after the publication of earlier *Provinciales*. Evidently most of this criticism originated from the Jesuit circle and it is thus in this direction that Pascal aims his defence. The Jesuits had claimed that the author of the letters should be condemned, as he had turned "les choses saintes en raillerie". Pascal rejects this by claiming that he cannot underline "des décisions si fantastiques et si peu chrétiennes" in authors such as Escobar without being accused of laughing at religion (p.419). There is a wide gulf between mocking religion and mocking those doctrines which defile religion "par leurs opinions extravagantes" (p.419). Laughter is a useful medium for exposing the errors inherent in man. Adam, whose nature was reduced to "cette misérable condition, qui était due à son péché", deserves to be ridiculed of because of this very sin. It is possible that "la moquerie est quelquefois plus propre à faire revenir les hommes de leurs égarements, et qu'elle est alors une action de justice" (p.420).

Moreover Saint Augustine had stated that even "les sages rient des insensés", thus rendering the doctrine permissible. The saint had also declared that it is far from true that Catholics "ne doivent écrire qu'avec une froideur de style qui endorme les lecteurs". If errors were not challenged, then they may enter into the Church, which should not be allowed to occur (pp.420-421). As long as the purpose of such actions is the greater glorification of God, then the Christian is in the right to do such things. Thus the purpose of all things is the worship of God. It is important to note though that not all Jansenists would agree with this; figures such as Angélique insisted that her followers would be better to stay away from debates such as this because they compromised their humility.

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[66] Walter E. Rex, *Pascal's Provincial Letters*, p.67
[67] Richard Parish, *Pascal's* Lettres Provinciales, p.83

For the first time Pascal also defends Port-Royal against criticisms levelled against its inhabitants; it is interesting that it has taken him so long to do so. It has been suggested that the group's members do not venerate the saints, but Pascal declares that they live a life which is "pure et austère". However it is important to note that whilst Pascal attacks the Jesuits at this point, he does not insist upon Jansenism as the only viable alternative. He may be denouncing the Jesuits, but he is not claiming that the Jansenists are entirely superior, or followers of the only true piety.

In the twelfth letter he does declare his own personal superiority over the Jesuits. They have labelled him "impie, bouffon, ignorant, farceur, imposteur, calomniateur, fourbe, hérétique, calviniste déguisé", whereas in reality they are more suspect than him (p.424). The Jesuit aim is simply to maintain "le crédit et la gloire" of their movement (p.426). This could be seen to contrast his own aim, which is to uphold the true doctrines of the Church. The Jesuits are attempting to prevent his work from being read, as this is the "seul moyen qui [leur] reste pour conserver encore quelque temps [leur] crédit" (pp.430-431). His arguments are so persuasive that the only way that these arguments can be silenced is for the Jesuits to have his work banned.

The criticism of the Jesuit movement peaks in the sixteenth *Provinciale* where Pascal concludes that its members are nothing other than "des imposteurs". It is here that he makes his greatest defence of the Jansenists, and particularly of Port-Royal. He declares that the Jesuits' darkest calumny is their assertion that the nuns at the convent, and their spiritual directors, do not believe in the "mystère de la transsubstantiation" (p.446). The interesting thing to note in this defence, however, is that Pascal does not view himself as being an integral part of this Jansenist movement. He declares that if the nuns had needed a defender they could have found "de meilleurs" than him. Furthermore he states that in defending them he is not asserting their innocence, but rather condemning the malice of the Jesuits. They may suggest that he is linked with the convent, since this is their principal accusation against anyone who opposes them, but he is not a member of that movement. In addition the inhabitants of Port-Royal are far from the only ones whom God "veut opposer à [leurs] désordres": the Jesuit movement is universally hated and its lax morality could be

condemned by anyone. In contrast, the "pieux solitaires" attached to the convent possess "piété et...lumière", but Pascal has never had "établissement avec eux" (p.447).

The Jesuits, through Père Meynier, have accused Saint-Cyran, Arnauld, Mère Agnès and her nuns of holding a view of the Eucharist that is "suspecte", and have labelled Arnauld "effectivement calviniste". Such accusations are ludicrous to Pascal: why should the nuns have taken the name Saint-Sacrement if this were true? According to him, in the whole Church there is nobody about whom the Jesuits could have made "un si abominable reproche avec moins de vraisemblance" (p.447). Pascal proves this by quoting Saint-Cyran, who had written in his letters that "Jésus-Christ repose dans l'Eucharistie avec la même gloire qu'il a dans le Ciel". He obviously did believe that Jesus was present in the Sacraments, despite Jesuit accusations that he did not (pp.447-448). Although the Jesuits believe that Port-Royal "forme une cabale secrète depuis trente-cinq ans, dont M. de Saint-Cyran et M. d'Ypres ont été les chefs", the Jansenists "n'ont fait autre chose que prêcher la grâce de Jésus-Christ, la pureté de l'Évangile et les obligations du baptême" (pp.451-452). This purity in the Jansenists' doctrine is contrasted with the lax Jesuit assertion that "toutes sortes de personnes et même les prêtres peuvent recevoir le corps de Jésus-Christ le jour même qu'ils se sont souillés par des péchés abominables". According to this movement, their confessors should not turn penitents away but rather urge them to take communion as soon as possible (p.449). Once again Pascal demonstrates his support for Arnauld's ideas.

By the time of the publication of the seventeenth letter the Jesuits had secured a decree forbidding works to appear without the name of the author and a *privilège*. However this did not discourage Pascal and he now takes the time to defend his own position against the Jesuit onslaught. He attacks the poor arguments put forward against him: the movement believes that all the response necessary to his first fifteen letters is "de dire 15 fois que je suis hérétique", thus denying him any credibility. Furthermore he has never acted to cause a "schisme avec l'Église" and he declares once and for all, "je ne suis point de Port-Royal" (p.454). By stating that they are "propositions impies, que je déteste de tout mon cœur", he rebukes the Jesuits for their assertion that he has defended the five propositions. He recognises the Pope as the Church's "souverain chef" and wishes to both live and die in "la

seule Église Catholique, Apostolique et Romaine". It is important for him to defend his own orthodoxy.

However after defending himself, he returns to his support for the Jansenist movement. The question of the five propositions was particularly important at this time, so it was only natural that he should choose to discuss the matter. Although the Jesuits have condemned these propositions as appearing in the work of Jansenius "mot à mot", they have never been able to point out exactly where, whilst the Jansenists have always denied that Jesus only died to save the elect, whether Jansenius believed this or not (p.456). Moreover the Pope has never mentioned the doctrine of efficacious grace and it has never been condemned, since it can be found in the works of both Augustine and Thomas Aquinas, in addition to various ecumenical councils and the Church tradition. Finally the Church does not question matters of fact, only matters of faith (p.457), whilst the Jesuits have never explicitly stated in what sense Jansenius had actually meant the ideas portrayed in the five propositions (p.459). The only conclusion to which the author can come is that the Jesuits have made these assertions against the Jansenists to resurrect "la grâce suffisante de...Molina", which was impossible "sans ruiner la grâce efficace" (p.460). Even when defending himself, Pascal still feels that it is necessary to support the central tenets of Jansenism; by this point he cannot be extricated from this group.

This importance is underlined by the fact that he returns to his defence of the Jansenists in the eighteenth *Provinciale*. Pascal again defends Jansenius against the accusation of heresy. He explains that the Jesuits have condemned the Dutchman's theory of efficacious grace through their claim that his beliefs approximated to those of Calvin, rather than the more suitable doctrine of the Thomists. However, as Pascal shows, the Jansenists reject the concept that man cannot resist efficacious grace, thereby contradicting Calvin and his followers. Indeed their beliefs are portrayed as orthodox since they assert that

> l'homme par sa propre nature a toujours le pouvoir de pécher et de résister à la grâce, et que depuis sa corruption il porte un fond malheureux de concupiscence qui lui augmente infiniment ce pouvoir.

They also declare that when God is touched by His "miséricorde", He gives His grace, without this destroying "en aucune sorte la liberté naturelle de l'homme" (p.462). Through the gift of grace man is made aware of "sa mortalité et son néant" and conceives a hatred for "les délices du péché qui le séparent du bien incorruptible". Man *could* resist this grace if he so wished but seeing what is best for him he accepts gratefully. In this way both man and God have their part in the process, thereby allying the Jansenists' belief with that of the Dominicans (pp.462-463).

Indeed this belief is so orthodox that it has been affirmed by Saints Augustine, Prosper and Thomas, in addition to various Councils (p.463). No matter how strongly the Jesuits argue against the Jansenists, the belief of the latter is in keeping with the tradition of the Church and any contention possible is merely a *question de fait*. Galileo had been condemned for his beliefs concerning the universe but Rome's decrees do not prove that the earth "demeure en repos". If there is evidence that the earth does turn continually, then all the decrees of men will not stop it from turning (p.467). In the same way no amount of condemnation from the Jesuits will prove that the Jansenists are heretics if they are not. It is interesting that Pascal should choose this analogy. His interest in science has not dwindled, despite his greater involvement in religious matters.

After this letter, Pascal had begun to prepare a nineteenth but it remained unfinished; nobody has ever been able to ascertain successfully why he should have brought his work to an end so abruptly. It is possible that the Jansenists no longer felt they needed his aid. On his deathbed Pascal gave his final judgement on his polemical work. Declaring that he was saddened by the split in the Church, he stated that instead of fighting each other these factions should be acting against "les véritables infidèles et hérétiques": he now felt that any other arguments were senseless. Furthermore, according to Le Guern, Pascal found the discussion on grace and predestination "stérile", much preferring the attack on lax morality.[68]

[68] Blaise Pascal, *Les Provinciales*, p.18

In the *Provinciales*, the least literary sections are those concerning the doctrines put forward by the Jansenists. The style at these points is more reminiscent of a religious pamphlet, which contrasts with Pascal's style earlier in the work. He was evidently more at ease with mocking the behaviour of the Jesuits than in dry theological discussions. In fact, Parish has asserted that the last two letters

> complete the process of defictionalization by mirroring the first series: the *Lettres Provinciales* began with a correspondence between two individuals (Montalte and the 'ami provincial'), and they conclude with two letters...addressed by Pascal (still for obvious reasons not specifically identified) to Annat.[69]

When taken as a whole, this work has clearly been deeply influenced by Jansenist figures and their works. Quite apart from the fact that they were written with the initial intention of defending Arnauld, they contain many ideas that can be traced back to Jansenist works, particularly to *De la fréquente communion*. Pascal was greatly influenced by Jansenius and his successors and adheres to their doctrines in general, even if he does not highlight individual beliefs and explain their superiority.

However, although Jansenist doctrine has greatly influenced the work, some critics believe that it is debatable whether the *Provinciales* should be thought of as a literary or as a religious work. Kolakowski has suggested that they can be classed as a "pamphlet, not a theological study", whose Jansenist nature could "pass unnoticed".[70] This assertion is somewhat extreme, and we might well ask if the letters taking the form of a pamphlet would necessarily preclude them from also being a theological study. Although Pascal may not overtly claim that the Jansenist movement is any better than any other religious group, he does demonstrate his own preference for these doctrines over those of the Jesuits.

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[69] Richard Parish, *Pascal's* Lettres Provinciales, p.173
[70] Leszek Kolakowski, *God Owes us Nothing*, p.63

So, if the work can be seen as a religious one, should it also be considered to be a work of literature? One measure of the literary quality of a work is its success and critical acclaim. The success of the *Provinciales* is undoubted and is attested by Jansenist accounts, and the fact that so many reprints were made despite the very real danger of arrest and prosecution.[71] Kolakowski thinks it is important that despite the Jesuits' wealth of learned theologians, they were unable to produce one who could match Pascal's literary talent.[72] Indeed Boileau believed that this work was so impressive that it was the only piece by a modern author which was in reality superior to anything produced in ancient Greece and Rome.[73] Its impact was so great, that even Louis XIV was said to have laughed at one of them, despite his malign feelings towards the Jansenists.[74]

However, Pascal should not be viewed as a Jansenist himself. Even whilst writing the work, he did not take up residence at Port-Royal, instead preferring to remain in society,[75] a fact he was quick to assert within the work itself. Pascal's sole aim is not to put forward Jansenist beliefs, but he had obviously been touched by a stricter form of piety and was angered by those who would wish to deny these beliefs. Despite this, Mère Angélique, Singlin and Lancelot disapproved of the work.[76] They believed that it was unchristian to denounce others so vociferously, and Pascal was even criticised for betraying Saint-Cyran's memory.[77] Rex has contrasted Pascal's work with that of other Jansenist writers by commenting that in the *Provinciales* the reader finds

> the perfect mixture of the serious and the comic...the liveliness of a dialogue composed...the intuitive sense of just how long to stay on any one topic, the suspense that builds from Letter to Letter,

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[71] Walter E. Rex, *Pascal's Provincial Letters: An Introduction*, p.64
[72] Leszek Kolakowski, *God Owes us* Nothing, p.63
[73] Walter E. Rex, *Pascal's Provincial Letters: An Introduction*, p.7
[74] Ibid
[75] Sainte-Beuve, *Port-Royal, Livre troisième: Pascal*, Paris, 1926, p.174
[76] Philippe Sellier, *Port-Royal et la littérature,v.I*, p.163
[77] Ibid, p.165

whereas Jansenist authors "plow their way so systematically through all the points, major and minor".[78]

Unlike the polemical works of Arnauld, the *Provinciales* are both a work of fiction and a work of theology. As Moriarty has explained, Pascal succeeded in "bringing theological issues to the attention of a lay public, via a discursive form, the letter, that belonged in the world rather than the faculty of theology".[79]

Considering the unmitigated success of the *Provinciales*, it is unfortunate that Pascal died before completing the work which has come to be known as the *Pensées*. The majority of the fragments deal with the subject of religion and many form what is seen as a projected apology for the Christian religion. It is obvious that Pascal had been profoundly affected by his second conversion and his greater acquaintance with Port-Royal must have led to an increased interest in this faith. His commitment to religion is emphatically portrayed in this work, a fact that is highlighted through his substantial knowledge of the Bible. Gilberte even claimed that he knew the book by heart.[80] Sellier notes that there is evidence that, from the age of 24, he had given a great deal of time to the study of the Bible and the works of the Church Fathers.[81] It has been suggested that Pascal was given the idea of writing a form of apology after the Miracle of the Holy Thorn in 1656. He was supposedly so affected by this event that he began to meditate on the nature of miracles and their role in Christian belief.[82] He began to write various notes, and Sellier believes that it is likely that he began to classify these into sections in 1658.[83] It was in this same year that he gave a lecture at Port-Royal explaining the plan of his *Apology*. Not long after this he became ill and was unable to continue with the work in any great depth for long periods.

The idea of an apology for the Christian religion was far from original and the genre can be traced back to the first few centuries of the first millennium AD. Writers such as Justin and

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[78] Walter E. Rex, *Pascal's Provincial Letters: An Introduction*, p.59
[79] Michael Moriarty, *Early Modern French Thought: The Age of Suspicion*, Oxford, 2003, p.19
[80] Francis X. J. Coleman, *Neither Angel nor Beast*, p.38
[81] Philippe Sellier, *Pascal et saint Augustin*, Paris, 1970, p.14
[82] John Cruickshank, *Pascal: Pensées*, p.27
[83] Philippe Sellier, *Port-Royal et la littérature, v.1*, p.67

Tertullian wished to defend their faith against its critics, whilst later the apology became an explanation of why one should believe at all.[84] The objective of a work such as Pascal's is the conversion of the non-believer, although he asserts that man alone cannot bring about any such event. Pasqua explains that although conversion is a gift of God, it could not take place "au détriment de la liberté humaine".[85] In this way Pascal diverges from the Jansenist belief, giving a more prominent place to human free will than they did.[86]

It is thought that there were to be two main sections in Pascal's projected work, the first depicting the "connaissance de l'homme", whilst the second would describe the "connaissance de Dieu".[87] According to Krailsheimer, the fragmentary nature of the work does not hinder the reader from perceiving that faith is "the result of God inclining our hearts, rather than convincing our minds, and doing so solely and always through Christ, without whom it is not possible to know God at all".[88] Indeed one of the most easily identifiable aspects of the work is the image of "the selfishness, the duplicity, the cruelty, and the depravity of the human self", a depiction of man which may well remind us initially of La Rochefoucauld.[89] However even a preliminary study of the *Pensées* demonstrates that the two authors are very different, both in style and content. Whereas La Rochefoucauld criticises society without any real theological answer to man's state, Pascal directly links human unhappiness to absence from God. It has been noted that it is Pascal's emphasis on man's wickedness as a consequence of original sin which demonstrates the affect of Saint-Cyran's work on his own.[90] As will become obvious, Pascal wished to demonstrate that the dichotomy of man's nature could only be explained with reference to God and the Christian religion.[91]

When Pascal died, the work was left in a state of great disarray, and was not published until some years later. In fact the first edition of the *Pensées* was published under the auspices of

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[84] Hervé Pasqua, *Blaise Pascal: penseur de la grâce*, p.31
[85] Ibid, p.33
[86] Ibid, p.34
[87] Philippe Sellier, *Port-Royal et la littérature v.1*, p.80
[88] Alban Krailsheimer, *Pascal*, p.49
[89] Francis X. J. Coleman, *Neither Angel nor* Beast, p.157
[90] John Cruickshank, *Pascal: Pensées*, p.18
[91] Ibid, p.54

Port-Royal in 1670. Unfortunately the editors failed to preserve the order that Pascal had imposed on the work and, according to Cruickshank, ignored his "apologetic strategy".[92] According to Mariner, contemporary evidence suggests that the Jansenists could not agree how best to present the work. It seems that they differed on how the fragments should be ordered and edited, and what preface would best suit the work.[93] In the end all those fragments which appeared either unfinished or unorthodox were removed, which left only an idea of what the work may have been intended to be.[94] Evidently the Jansenists would wish to claim him as one of their own, so this first edition "tire Pascal du côté du jansénisme".[95] To claim that such a great man was from their own ranks would be a great publicity coup for the movement.

The *Préface* to this edition illuminates the Jansenist attitude towards the author. It explains that Pascal was once a great mathematician and scientist who, around the age of thirty, gave up such activities so that he could "s'appliquer à des choses plus sérieuses et relevées"; he had given up the ego-centric sciences in order to concentrate on "l'Écriture, [les] Pères et ... la morale chrétienne" (p.41). It is all too evident that the Jansenists saw the sciences as a form of study unworthy of a true Christian.

However, as has been shown, Pascal never gave up these activities entirely. According to Nelson, even whilst composing his projected Apology he was "intensely engaged in mathematical and other scientific work".[96] In fact, the *Pensées* contain evidence of Pascal's scientific leanings through references to mathematics. Descotes has suggested that Pascal is not alone in this, as other religious apologists of Christianity "n'hésitent guère, quand ils le peuvent, à employer des arguments empruntés aux mathématiques".[97] However, the Jansenists attempted to play down Pascal's continued interest in the sciences because his pursuit of knowledge could be seen as an endeavour inspired by sinful pride. This highlights his partial distance from the group and their doctrine.

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[92] John Cruickshank, *Pascal: Pensées*, p.30
[93] Frank Mariner, 'The Order of Disorder: The Problem of the Fragment in Pascal *Pensées*', *Papers on French Seventeenth-Century Literature*, 38 (1993), pp.171-182 (p.180)
[94] John Cruickshank, *Pascal: Pensées*, p.31
[95] Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*, ed. Michel Le Guern, no place, 1977, p.13
[96] Robert J. Nelson, *Pascal: Adversary and Advocate*, p.2
[97] Dominique Descotes, 'Les anges quadrateurs', *Littératures classiques*, 39 (2000), pp.179-179 (p.179)

The exact way to view both the *Pensées* and their author is always difficult and has occasioned much critical output. The varying editions which appeared over the subsequent centuries showed their author in many different lights and have enabled Pascal to be seen as a sceptic, a rationalist and even as anti-Jansenist.[98] This latter assertion is most unlikely, but the very fact that critics vary so widely in their opinions of the work shows that many interpretations are possible. Above all Pascal demonstrates his commitment to Christianity because everything can be explained through the existence of God. In the fourth *Pensée* he provides what can be seen as a short explanation of his main plan:

> 1re partie. Misère de l'homme sans Dieu.
> 2e partie. Félicité de l'homme avec Dieu.
> autrement
> 1re partie. Que la nature est corrompue, par la nature même
> 2e partie. Qu'il y a un Réparateur, par l'Écriture. (Lafuma 6)

The state of human nature is depicted in the most depressing terms; man is corrupt when separated from God. This is indeed a truly Augustinian way of viewing humanity and initially suggests that the *Pensées* may well be a Jansenist work.

Pascal summarises the human condition as "inconstance, ennui, inquiétude" (*Pensée* 24) and asserts that men are "incapables et de vrai et de bien" (*Pensée* 28). What compounds such a nature is the fact that man is blind to his state: Pascal tells us, "ce qui m'étonne le plus est de voir que tout le monde n'est pas étonné de sa faiblesse...on se trouve déçu à toute heure" (*Pensée* 33). In fact, Goldmann has stated that the fragmentary form is the best format for this work, since it fits perfectly with "le message essentiel" that "l'homme est un être paradoxal, en même temps grand et petit, fort et faible".[99]

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[98] Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*, ed. Michel Le Guern, p.13
[99] Lucien Goldmann, *Le Dieu caché*, p.220

It has been suggested that above all others Pascal owes his views on the pretensions of man to Montaigne,[100] which is unsurprising when the *Entretien* is taken into account. In fact there are various references to Montaigne made in the work, which have been highlighted by numerous critics. Magnard explains that many of these references are made in a negative way: he sees Pascal as a "censeur de Montaigne",[101] although he also believes that Pascal's vocabulary owes much to his reading of the *Essais*.[102] Indeed, for Magnard, the reader of the *Pensées* "a le sentiment que le pénitent de Port-Royal tente d'exorciser non seulement le démon des lettres profanes, mais aussi et surtout la fascination qu'exerce sur lui Montaigne".[103] It is interesting that, despite his move towards a stricter form of piety, Pascal was drawn to authors such as Montaigne, of whom Jansenists such as Sacy would hardly approve.

Whatever the extent of the influence of Montaigne on Pascal, and exactly what Pascal thought about this influence, his theological position is certainly in keeping with that of the Jansenists. He links all of man's faults to his doctrinal beliefs on original sin. After the Fall, man was reduced to a state of weakness without God. He was separated from His grace, without which he remains corrupted. Therefore man "n'est qu'un sujet plein d'erreur naturelle...sans la grâce" (*Pensée* 44). Above all "il faut se connaître soi-même" (*Pensée* 72), but this is difficult as men are affected by the blindness of pride and sin. The knowledge of divine truth is a gift of God: as Woshinsky explains, "man cannot attain it by his own efforts".[104] This view of the Fall has much in common with that of the Jansenists. Wetsel has explained that there exist "significant parallels between the major themes of Sacy's biblical commentaries and ideas that are central to the argument of the *Pensées*".[105] He continues by stating that, "in strikingly similar arguments", Pascal and Sacy both describe "the practical consequences of the corruption of human reason in Adam's fall from grace".[106]

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[100] J.H. Broome, *Pascal*, London, 1965, p.81
[101] See Pierre Magnard, 'Pascal censeur de Montaigne', pp.615-638
[102] Ibid, p.616
[103] Ibid, p.633
[104] Barbara Woshinsky, 'Pascal's *Pensées* and the Discourse of the Inexpressible', *Papers on French Seventeenth-Century Literature*, 14, number 2 (1981), pp.56-65 (p.62)
[105] David Wetsel, *L'Écriture et le Reste*, p.xviii
[106] Ibid, p.xviii

Wetsel also argues that both Pascal and Sacy aim to prove that Christianity "is not of human invention" by demonstrating that this religion had its historical roots in the Old Testament. Whilst Sacy argues that the Old Testament can be interpreted allegorically, the New Testament should be interpreted literally, something which is "everywhere reflected in Pascal's analysis of specific biblical texts". In addition both figures "elevate an idea implicit in the Augustinian tradition, the notion of *Deus Absconditus*, to the rank of dogma".[107] There is evidence in the *Entretien* that Pascal and Sacy had discussed these ideas. Just as Pascal was influenced by Arnauld after defending him in the *Provinciales*, there is evidence that he was also influenced by Sacy after these meetings.

This concept of the hidden God is, for Goldmann, at the heart of Pascal's work, whilst also being a central tenet of tragedy during this period. Whilst God is hidden from the majority, "il est visible pour ceux qu'il a élus".[108] Goldmann sees the *Pensées* as the fragmentary equivalent of the monologue in tragedy. The believer who knows that he will have no response from his God can only have recourse to this form of communication: "l'homme parle au seul être qui pourrait l'entendre mais dont il ne saura jamais s'il entend réellement".[109] In addition, he also states that "le thème du Dieu caché" is implicit in Arnauld's work on Malebranche and Lamy. According to Goldmann, it is here that the reader sees that "nous ne voyons rien en Dieu et Dieu ne nous éclaire pas toujours". This does not mean that man has been abandoned entirely, since he has the scripture to guide him.[110]

Pascal also asserts that if man "n'avait jamais été corrompu, il jouirait dans son innocence et de la vérité et de la félicité avec assurance" (*Pensée* 131). Adam's sin has been passed down through the generations rather like a genetic defect, a fact which man fails to comprehend:

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[107] David Wetsel, *L'Écriture et le Reste*, p.xix
[108] Lucien Goldmann, *Le Dieu cache*, p.46
[109] Ibid, p.77
[110] Ibid, p.180

> Car il est sans doute qu'il n'y a rien qui choque plus notre raison que de dire que le péché du premier homme ait rendu coupables ceux qui, étant si éloignés de cette source, semblent incapables d'y participer (*Pensée* 131).

It is the concupiscence resulting from this sin which "vous soustrait de Dieu", and it is only through His grace that the remedy can be found. It is unbelievable that "Dieu s'unisse à nous", but He does indeed help us (*Pensée* 149).

However, even when man gains knowledge of God, he must also remember his misery, or this causes problems:

> La connaissance de Dieu sans celle de sa misère fait l'orgueil. La connaissance de sa misère sans celle de Dieu fait le désespoir. La connaissance de Jésus-Christ fait le milieu parce que nous y trouvons et Dieu et notre misère (*Pensée* 192).

Pascal advises his readers that "il faut n'aimer que Dieu et ne haïr que soi" (*Pensée* 373). However Pascal did not believe that faith in God is the affect of hard work on the part of the penitent: it is simply a gift from God. Thus there would be no faith "si Dieu n'incline le cœur" (*Pensée* 380). Such a pessimistic view of human nature does suggest that he had been greatly affected by the Jansenist piety. Like the Jansenists, he saw man in the worst possible way.

However, despite these harsh views, there is also evidence that Pascal did assert the possibility of a more positive outlook. In spite of man's sin and corruption, there remains some remnant of his prelapsarian greatness. Indeed, Pascal states that "la grandeur de l'homme est si visible qu'elle se tire même de sa misère". Vestigial signs of his past remain, which is evident in the "grandeur de l'homme dans sa concupiscence même" (*Pensée* 118). To some extent man is aware that he is miserable, but he is great "puisqu'il le connaît" (*Pensée* 122).

Although man's reason has been damaged through original sin this does not mean that it has no role to play. Pasqua explains that whilst "Pascal critique le mauvais usage de la raison, il n'en condamne pas l'usage". This evidently contrasts with the teachings of Jansenists such as Saint-Cyran. However he does assert that reason can be misused if it is not submitted to the rule of faith.[111] He asserts, "soumission et usage de la raison: en quoi consiste le vrai christianisme" (*Pensée* 167). For him there are two excesses, "exclure la raison, n'admettre que la raison" (*Pensée* 183).

Despite his belief in the importance of reason, Pascal does assert that only those who have faith can be happy (*Pensée* 148). It is in vain that man searches for happiness within himself. Thus in *Pensée* 149 Pascal states:

> Ne cherchez pas de satisfaction dans la terre, n'espérez rien des hommes, votre bien n'est qu'en Dieu, et la souveraine félicité consiste à connaître Dieu, à s'unir à lui pour jamais dans l'éternité.

He also explains that there are "peu de vrais chrétiens". Some may think that they believe in God but they are in fact led by superstition (*Pensée* 179). This assertion is in keeping with the Jansenist belief that only the elect few can have true faith. The road to real Christianity is too difficult for the majority. Moreover he states that there is "assez de clarté pour éclairer les élus et assez d'obscurité pour les humilier". Their state is contrasted with that of the "réprouvés" who are to be condemned (*Pensée* 236). Even the elect should be wary since there is no truer doctrine than that which teaches man's "double capacité de recevoir et de perdre la grâce" (*Pensée* 354). Again in keeping with Jansenist doctrine, Pascal asserts that even the just can have grace withdrawn at any time.

Pascal is also in agreement with the Jansenists on the subject of *divertissement*. Like them, he sees certain pastimes as an excuse to avoid self-contemplation. As Harrington has explained, "pour Pascal, le divertissement se définit comme l'ensemble des activités

[111] Herve Pasqua, *Blaise Pascal: penseur de la grâce*, p.87

humaines dont l'objet immédiat n'est pas Dieu".[112] Pascal states that "si notre condition était véritablement heureuse, il ne faudrait pas nous divertir d'y penser" (*Pensée* 70). If man were truly happy "il le serait d'autant plus qu'il serait moins diverti, comme les saints et Dieu" (*Pensée* 132). He asserts that when we study the pastimes of men it becomes obvious that their unhappiness is due to one thing, "qui est de ne savoir pas demeurer en repos dans une chambre". We cannot sit quietly because of the "malheur naturel de notre condition faible et mortelle". Instead we seek "le divertissement et l'occupation au dehors". Without any kind of occupation man finds "point de joie" *(Pensée* 136). In this way, although *divertissement* is the only thing which consoles us from our misery, it is also "la plus grande de nos misères" because it does not allow us to contemplate our true nature and leads us to our spiritual death (*Pensée* 414).

According to Fletcher, Pascal shows that the theatre is to be abhorred with particular vigour as it represents human love in an attractive way, despite the fact that it is "an unworthy object". We should not devote our time to love but rather to God.[113] Pascal also suggested that the language of poetry is corrupted. He views profane poetry in the same way as other Jansenists viewed the theatre.[114] As is the case with the Jansenists, he detests literature whose sole purpose is to divert the reader rather than to bring the faithful closer to God. As Gallucci has suggested, Pascal sees the composition of profane poetry as "a sign of ignorance".[115] Gallucci also believes that his condemnation of poetry was inherited from the tradition of the Platonists,[116] which suggests that in this case his beliefs did not originate with Augustine. In fact, since Nicole's treatise on the theatre was produced over ten years after Pascal's death, it is evident that he was himself deeply influenced by the *Pensées*. Jansenism may have affected Pascal's thinking, but the movement was itself influenced by him.

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[112] Thomas More Harrington, *Pascal philosophe*, p.115
[113] T.H. Fletcher, *Pascal and the Mystical Tradition*, Oxford, 1954, p.66
[114] John A. Gallucci, 'Pascal and Kenneth Burke: An Argument for a "Logological" Reading of the *Pensées*', *Papers on French Seventeenth-Century Literature*, 38 (1993), pp.123-150 (p.144)
[115] Ibid, p.146
[116] John A. Gallucci, 'Pascal Poeta-Theologus', *Papers on French Seventeenth-Century Literature*, 32 (1990), pp.150-170 (p.155)

Given this view of literature and other secular diversions, it is surprising that Pascal would continue to remain in society amongst such sinful people. Even though he advocates contemplation and religious activities, he was still continuing with his scientific endeavours throughout this period of his life. Yet he still makes comments on the unsuitability of such pursuits. For example, he declares that curiosity "n'est que vanité le plus souvent; on ne veut savoir que pour en parler" (*Pensée* 77). He also states that there are two extremities in the sciences:

> la première est la pure ignorance naturelle où se trouvent tous les hommes en naissant, l'autre...est celle où arrivent les grandes âmes qui, ayant parcouru tout ce que les hommes peuvent savoir, trouvent qu'ils ne savent rien et se rencontrent en cette même ignorance d' où ils étaient partis (*Pensée* 83).

He condemns those who place too much emphasis on science, thereby leaving too little room for religion. However this may be, it is difficult to view Pascal as a true and committed Jansenist when he was unable to give up his scientific research completely in favour of religion. Perhaps this was something that he would have explained further if he had finished the work.

He gives many arguments to prove the superiority of Christianity over other religions, for example in *Pensée* 204: "fausseté des autres religions. Mahomet sans autorité". The main evidence for their lack of truth is the fact that "ils n'ont point de témoins". This is in contrast to Christianity, of which there are many proofs. There is a huge difference "entre Jésus-Christ et Mahomet": there was no prophecy concerning Mohammed but the birth of Jesus was predicted (*Pensée* 209). In fact any man could have done what Mohammed did "car il n'a point fait de miracles", whereas no man could have done what Jesus did (*Pensée* 321). In addition true religion advises us to love our God whilst recognising our concupiscence and weakness (*Pensée* 214). It teaches us our duty and our pride, whilst also explaining our need for humility (*Pensée* 216).

The one religion which has some affinity with Christianity is Judaism, but even this is false, not least because its people failed to recognise the coming of the Messiah. Similarities do remain however: Jews too recognise the reality of original sin, as Genesis states that "la composition du cœur de l'homme est mauvaise dès son enfance" (*Pensée* 278). As a people they deserve "une vénération particulière" as they are the most ancient of all people on earth. However, they are no longer God's chosen few: they are "un peuple rebelle et impatient" (*Pensée* 451). Pascal believes that there is an important reason why the Jewish people have been allowed to remain in existence: they act as a witness to the truth of the Christian religion. They are necessary "pour la preuve de Jésus-Christ" (*Pensée* 311). This is a truly Augustinian concept: in Book 18 of *De Civitate Dei*, Augustine comments that the Jews were scattered all over the world "and thus by the evidence of their own Scriptures they bear witness for us that we have not fabricated the prophecies about Christ".[117] However, even though Pascal asserts the superiority of Christianity, he never once takes the opportunity to mention the supposed greater piety to be found amongst the Jansenists.

Having shown Christianity to be the true religion, Pascal was presumably going to expound the necessity for wagering on it. This is a bet without the chance of failure: faith is a gift of God, so if we believe, we have already found Him. He explains that we must make our choice between God and the world. If we choose rightly then we gain "une éternité de vie et de bonheur" (*Pensées* 418-426). Jesus came to show us that our only enemy was ourselves, since our passions separate us from God (*Pensée* 433). After Jesus showed us the truth, there is nothing else which separates us from God other than ourselves. However despite Pascal's insistence on faith as a gift of grace, it remains difficult to see how any kind of wager can be reconciled with the Jansenists' form of piety. For them man is powerless without God and Pascal's insistence on human reason appears discordant with this idea.

Many of Pascal's criticisms of man can be seen to be directed at philosophers, Pyrrhonists in particular, as they have given false hope to men through their advocacy of self-reliance.

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[117] Saint Augustine, *City of God against the Pagans*, translated by Henry Bettenson, London, 1984, pp.827-828

Like Jansenists such as Saint-Cyran and Singlin,[118] he believes that philosophers wrongly teach reliance on the powers of men. He explains that they have not given a true remedy for unhappiness and asks, "est-ce avoir guéri la présomption de l'homme que de l'avoir mis à l'égal de Dieu?" Only the one true religion can do this for man (*Pensée* 149). Furthermore he states that some philosophers claim that men should love only God, whilst all the time they wish to be loved themselves. They "ne connaissent pas leur corruption" (*Pensée* 142). Their advice to their followers on the state of man is false:

> Ils inspiraient des mouvements de grandeur pure et ce n'est pas l'état de l'homme. Ils inspiraient des mouvements de bassesse pure; or, ce n'est point l'état de l'homme (*Pensée* 398).

Instead penitence is necessary, only this will lead us to the grandeur we seek (*Pensée* 398). The "fausseté des philosophes" is also evident in their lack of discussion on the immortality of the soul (*Pensée* 409).

Despite Pascal's obvious admiration for Montaigne, he is also widely criticised in the *Pensées*. He explains that Montaigne was wrong to suggest that man should follow custom because it is "raisonnable et juste" (*Pensée* 525). What is bad in his work could be corrected easily if only he had been told that he spoke too much of himself (*Pensée* 649). His views on suicide and death are also to be condemned because he inspires a "nonchalance du salut". His work was not intended to bring piety and his pagan concept of death cannot be excused (*Pensée* 680). Of course in denying the possibility of pagan wisdom, Pascal was in agreement with Saint Augustine. As Sellier has noted, philosophers such as the Platonists may have been able to perceive "le souverain bien" but they were unable to understand the nature of God fully because they did not have the help of the one true mediator, Jesus.[119] Unlike Pascal, French apologists of the first half of the seventeenth century had tended to "reconcile the Christian tradition with the philosophies of

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[118] Arnauld and Nicole appear to have a more relaxed approach to philosophy; see Ernest Mortimer, *Blaise Pascal: The Life and Work of a Realist*, London, 1959, p.84

[119] Philippe Sellier, *Pascal et saint Augustin*, p.87

antiquity".[120] In this way he is more in keeping with the Jansenists than with other apologists.

However it should be noted that Pascal is probably not as vehemently against philosophers as some of the earlier Jansenist figures were. Harrington has suggested that he believed that the views of Plato and Aristotle were acceptable to some extent because "la partie la plus «philosophe» de leur vie était de vivre simplement et tranquillement". Harrington asserts that Pascal was interested in their value of simplicity above all else, and that he wished to utilise philosophy "pour rapprocher son lecteur du christianisme".[121] Like the Jansenist educators at the *Petites Ecoles*, he realised that philosophy could have its use. Yet he seems to have appreciated its use much more than them.

Pascal also emphasises the need to follow those men whom God has chosen. For him the most important of these figures is Augustine and he often cites the saint as a man for whom the mysteries of faith had been revealed. For example, in *Pensée* 169 he declares "je ne serais pas chrétien sans les miracles, dit saint Augustin". He also implies that whilst modern society "aime que le pape soit infaillible en la foi", it is really to men such as Augustine that we should turn. In this way, "Dieu conduit bien son Église de l'avoir envoyé devant avec autorité" (*Pensées* 515-524). He states that if we consider the Church as a multitude of people, then the Pope is merely "une partie" of the whole institution. There is almost no country other than France "où il soit permis de dire que le concile est au-dessus du pape" (*Pensée* 604). Here Pascal is again turning to the question of *droit* and *fait*, whereby it is possible to view the Pope as fallible when we consider him as a man. He also defends the nuns of Port-Royal, stating that "il est impossible que ceux qui aiment Dieu de tout leur cœur méconnaissent l'Église" (*Pensée* 881).

The *Pensées* remain a difficult text because it is almost impossible to be absolutely certain of exactly what Pascal planned to say in the work. Above all else he asserts the necessity of the Christian life to all men. Woshinsky states that the purpose of the work was to act as "a

[120] J.H. Broome, *Pascal*, p.7
[121] Thomas Harrington, 'La Notion de simplicité chez Pascal', p.25

mediator between God and man",[122] a statement which suggests that his overwhelming purpose was to bring the believer to God, rather than to promote the Jansenists over all other forms of piety. He does assert views that are not entirely in keeping with the movement's particular form of piety, but he was still obviously deeply influenced by their theology. Whilst he should not be considered as a Jansenist himself, he portrays many of the movement's ideas in his work.

However, is it possible to view the *Pensées* as a Jansenist text? According to Kolakowski, the answer is not obvious but the "omnipresent message" of the work is that "nothing matters more, indeed nothing else matters, than eternal salvation and God". Viewed in this light, there is nothing specifically Jansenist about the work.[123] However he also believes that it is "not a matter of contention" that it should be read "in the Jansenist context". [124] Other critics are more certain of the Jansenist influence on Pascal. Sellier states that there is no Pascalian text which "permet sérieusement de mettre en doute la permanence de la pensée théologique exprimée dans les *Écrits sur la grâce*".[125]

It is true that Pascal does continually affirm the doctrine of original sin as an explanation for the state of man in contemporary times. He emphasises "l'infirmité de la nature humaine" in order to depict "la nécessite de la grâce divine".[126] He remains concordant with Saint Augustine in declaring that original sin has only injured human nature rather than corrupting it totally, a doctrine from which Jansenius diverged in his own writings.[127] Pascal is perhaps closer doctrinally to Augustine than to the Jansenists. He may underline man's fallibility but he also asserts the greatness can than also be found in humanity, a belief which contrasts with that of his friends at Port-Royal. The theological nature of the work is undoubtedly pessimistic but at no point does Pascal state that the Jansenist form of piety is superior in any way to any other movement, with exception of the Jesuits perhaps. The fact that he doesn't openly do this suggests that his main purpose was not to assert the

[122] Barbara Woshinsky, 'Pascal's *Pensées* and the Discourse of the Inexpressible', p.64
[123] Leszek Kolakowski, *God Owes us Nothing*, p.118
[124] Ibid, p.119
[125] Philippe Sellier, *Pascal et saint Augustin*, p.293
[126] Hervé Pasqua, *Blaise Pascal: penseur de la grâce*, p.26
[127] Ibid, p.150

superiority of Jansenism but rather it was to attract those whom God had called to the religious life.

Pascal's views are not immutable and even Sellier, a critic convinced of Pascal's Jansenist status, admits that the writer appears "quelque peu flottant: augustinien quand il s'agit d'itinéraire religieux, de jugement de valeur, son spiritualisme se tempère dès qu'on aborde le domaine de la simple réflexion psychologique".[128] However, even though he may diverge from the Jansenist path on certain things, he was evidently greatly affected by their views. It was through this movement that he became acquainted with the views of Augustine. Indeed these ideas form the backbone of his work.

As was the case with the *Provinciales*, the *Pensées* can be considered to be both a literary and a theological work. Cruickshank has argued that it is Pascal's ability "to argue persuasively" and his "literary skill" which form some of the most important reasons why the *Pensées* have remained so popular.[129] Yet Broome believes that they are "not 'literature' in any ordinary sense, but fragments of what was to be an urgent appeal to men".[130] This argument is difficult to sustain when we consider that the work was unfinished. It could also be said that in certain sections, for example where he speaks of original sin and man's corruption, Pascal is speaking as a theologian. Yet on closer examination, this assertion is also difficult to maintain. The *Pensées* are so different in style from the *Écrits sur la grâce*; they appear less theologically dense. As in the *Provinciales* Pascal did not wish to stifle his readership with dense doctrinal wrangling, instead he wished to use gentle persuasion and an altogether different manner of writing to bring his reader to Christianity. Pascal has once again succeeded in bringing together literature and Jansenist doctrine.

How, then, should Pascal be viewed: as a theologian, a scientist, or a man of the world? Sellier has stated that in the recent past he has been accepted as

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[128] Philippe Sellier, *Pascal et saint Augustin*, p.73
[129] John Cruickshank, *Pascal: Pensées*, p.48
[130] J.H. Broome, *Pascal*, p.1

> un savant brillant – mathématicien et physicien – qui n'avait guère fait que prêter sa plume, et son talent d'écrivain, à ses amis de Port-Royal...En somme la critique acceptait l'appellation lancée par les jésuites: 'le secrétaire de Port-Royal'.[131]

However, this interpretation of Pascal's life is not universally accepted and it is evident that no easy assumptions can be made. Sellier asserts that he may not have been a professional theologian concurrent with men such as Arnauld, but he can be considered as "un théologien augustinien bien informé".[132] Nelson has made a similar assertion, and states that Pascal is not "de Port-Royal": he emanates from his own personal theological position, with which the beliefs of the Jansenists happened to coincide.[133] Indeed, it is telling that a study of Pascal could not be made without any kind of reference to Jansenism but it would be quite possible that a study of Jansenism need not necessarily include any reference to Pascal. It could also be said that Pascal's two works "contain little doctrine that distinguishes them from orthodox Catholic theology and apologetic".[134] However Pascal was clearly affected by the doctrines of the Jansenist movement, particularly because of his aim to defend the group in the *Provinciales*. It is also important that his views on *divertissements* had so much influence on Nicole.

As Gallucci has explained, Pascal "n'est donc pas simplement un poète, ou un théologien, mais un *poeta-theologus*, les deux à la fois, toujours entre les deux".[135] Brunschvicg states that "l'augustinisme de Jansénius sera pour Pascal la religion dans sa pureté originelle". It is in this sense, and "d'ordre proprement historique", that Pascal is a Jansenist.[136] His unique achievement was that he was able to combine literature with specific examples of Jansenist doctrine.

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[131] Philippe Sellier, *Port-Royal et la littérature, v.1*, p.249
[132] Ibid
[133] Robert J. Nelson, *Pascal: Adversary and Advocate*, p.168
[134] T.H. Fletcher, *Pascal and the Mystical Tradition*, p.110
[135] John A. Gallucci, 'Pascal Poeta-Theologus', p.161
[136] Léon Brunschvicg, *Blaise Pascal*, Paris, 1953, p.31

LA ROCHEFOUCAULD

The seventeenth century in France was above all the age of the *moraliste*. During this period numerous works both of a religious and a secular nature were written with the aim of instructing society on its behaviour. One of the greatest genres utilised for this purpose was the maxim. By far the best known maximes are those written by the duc de La Rochefoucauld, an author who, according to Watts, has come to be known as the "principal inventor and unrivalled practitioner" of the genre.[1] Yet La Rochefoucauld's *Maximes* are not merely intended to teach men the ways of society; they are also a damning indictment of the state of human nature. The true reason for the duc's austere view of society has often been debated and there are various explanations for his pessimistic opinion of mankind. Firstly, born in 1613, he passed his childhood during the heroic part of the seventeenth century. As depicted in the early plays of Corneille, heroism was something great and to be admired. This was an age of optimism, with the more Christian form of Stoicism greatly prevalent. This outlook emphasised the ability of man to overcome passion and to live life with a kind of "noble fortitude".[2]

This situation ended abruptly with the *Frondes*, when the political aspirations of the aristocracy were destroyed. The near worship of heroism was defeated and along with it La Rochefoucauld's aristocratic pride. His association with the rebellion meant that, along with other members of the aristocracy, his situation was precarious for several years. His disappointments did not end here: in 1652 he was abandoned by his lover, Madame de Longueville, who apparently wished to lead a more pious life. These biographical events may be seen as an explanation for the many *maximes* condemning both love and heroism in La Rochefoucauld's work, but they are actually a far too facile justification for his condemnation of man and his lack of true virtue. Instead other influences were more prominent: for some, the most important was Jansenism.

[1] Derek A. Watts, *La Rochefoucauld: Maximes et Réflexions diverses*, Glasgow, 1993, p.1
[2] Ibid, p.2

La Rochefoucauld was connected to the Jansenist circle in various ways; firstly, he was the nephew of the duc de Liancourt, the figure whom Arnauld had defended in his *Lettre à une personne de condition*. Secondly, his former lover, Madame de Longueville, retreated to Port-Royal following their separation. Finally, the duc himself had become a regular at the salon of Madame de Sablé, one of the most important centres of Jansenism and literature.

It is this last association which is of the greatest importance to the composition of the *Maximes*. It has been suggested that the members of Madame de Sablé's circle played a game in which each of them had to provide a short statement on topics such as love. La Rochefoucauld is supposed to have noted down the assertions given: these notes supposedly formed the *Maximes*. Whilst this legend has been discredited as a nineteenth-century invention, it still remains unclear just how much influence these conversations exerted on the work as a whole.[3] It is generally accepted that some of the earlier *maximes* were composed as a result of close collaboration between La Rochefoucauld, Mme de Sablé and the Jansenist Jacques Esprit. Mme de Sablé was herself a convert to Jansenism and from 1656 she even lived within the walls of Port-Royal-de-Paris. Many Jansenists, or people at least linked with the movement, were regulars at her salon, and she claimed acquaintance with men such as Arnauld, Pierre Nicole and Pascal.[4]

The *Maximes* survive in various forms and were published several times. The manuscript dating from the period of collaboration with Madame de Sablé and Jacques Esprit contains 275 separate *maximes* and is known as the Liancourt manuscript. This is seen as the most clearly Jansenist form of the *Maximes*, which is no doubt due to the collaboration with Esprit. However this version of the work was not definitive, and was certainly not widely read: it was never published. Instead La Rochefoucauld used the manuscript to canvass opinions on his work. The results of this *sondage* are particularly interesting to any study of the Jansenist nature of the work. The survey, broadly speaking, gave three types of reply. Firstly, some argued that La Rochefoucauld rightfully condemned humanity in a way not

[3] Derek A. Watts, *La Rochefoucauld*, p.10
[4] D.J. Culpin, *La Rochefoucauld: Maximes*, London, 1995, p.15

dissimilar to the condemnation made by the early Church Fathers.[5] This is one of the best arguments for the Augustinian, and therefore Jansenist, reading of the work. However this is counterbalanced by the other two reactions, which argue against this interpretation. The second reaction given was that La Rochefoucauld clearly had the right kind of intentions in writing the work, but that he had failed to make the Christian message as overt as it should have been. Finally, the third reaction was that the duc was impious in that he denied the existence of true Christian virtue.[6] His friend, Mme de La Fayette, was supposedly so shocked by the content of the work that she was forced to comment, "quelle corruption il faut avoir dans l'esprit et dans le cœur pour être capable d'imaginer tout cela!"[7] This is particularly interesting when the pessimistic outlook in her work is considered.

Despite the seemingly bleak tone, the *Maximes* were a great success. The first printed edition appeared in 1664 in Holland, allegedly without the author's consent. The unsolicited appearance of his work meant that La Rochefoucauld decided to publish his work himself, which he did in 1665. By the time of this first official publication various changes had been made. Watts suggests that this may be in part due to the complaints collected in the *sondage*, when the author's dismissal of virtue was attacked.[8] Whatever the reasons for the changes, which shall be studied later, this version of the work was a great success, and the edition sold out.[9] Yet the process of rewriting did not cease and editions produced in 1666, 1671, 1675 and 1678 all differed in varying degrees.

From this initial study of the history of the *Maximes*, it is evident that the true ideological nature of the work is not entirely clear. The biographical details surrounding La Rochefoucauld suggest that he was a man disappointed by life and love, but his connection with Jansenist circles implies that he was pessimistic because he was influenced by their view of original sin. He would therefore conclude, as they had done, that it was impossible for fallen man to exhibit any signs of goodness, since he is depraved and full of self-love. However, whilst La Rochefoucauld is probably most often viewed as a Jansenist, his

[5] Derek A. Watts, *La Rochefoucauld*, p.13
[6] Ibid
[7] Ibid, p.15
[8] Ibid, p.14
[9] Ibid

Maximes have also been seen in many other different lights. They have been portrayed as propounding not just Jansenism, but also pessimism, Epicureanism, Stoicism, anti-Stoicism, Pyrrhonism, materialism, naturalism, determinism, formalism, nihilism, immoralism, heroism and voluntarism.[10] Many of these interpretations appear bizarre, especially the charges of Stoicism and heroism, but the very fact that the *Maximes* have been interpreted in so many different ways is important, since it demonstrates that any particular reading of the work is far from clear-cut. La Rochefoucauld cannot be labelled as a definitive Jansenist without further study.

Watts has stated that various *maximes* can be seen to come from sources as diverse as Corneille, Descartes and various Latin writers,[11] although he believes that the greatest influence was Montaigne,[12] a suggestion supported by Culpin.[13] To begin with let us take the example of the Stoic influence. Watts asserts that Seneca has had "a positive as well as a negative influence" on the *Maximes*. As evidence he quotes *maxime* 84 ("il est plus honteux de se défier de ses amis que d'en être trompé"), *maxime* 148 ("il y a des reproches qui louent, et des louanges qui médisent"), and *maxime* 511 ("nous craignons toutes choses comme mortels, et nous désirons toutes choses comme si nous étions immortels"), which he believes are "precise reminiscences" of the *De Ira* and the *De Brevitate Vitae*.[14]

Despite Watts's assertion, the influence of Stoicism on the *Maximes* is predominantly one of criticism. This is rendered most evident through the frontispiece of the early editions of the work. The image depicts the unmasking of Seneca: this informs the reader that Stoic philosophy, as epitomised by Seneca, is merely a way of deceiving man. The words inscribed under the bust of the philosopher are an allusion to Horace's statement "ridentem dicere verum quid vetat", meaning, "what prevents the laughing man from telling the truth?" The reader is told, therefore, that the moralist can make his assertions with the aid of humour,[15] an important point which is also echoed within Pascal's work. Campion has

[10] Philip E. Lewis, *La Rochefoucauld: The Art of Abstraction*, New York, 1977, p.40
[11] Derek A. Watts, *La Rochefoucauld*, p.16
[12] Ibid, p.17
[13] D.J. Culpin, *La Rochefoucauld*, p.20
[14] Derek A. Watts, *La Rochefoucauld*, p.16
[15] D.J. Culpin, *La Rochefoucauld*, p.29

also suggested that this laughter is "animée par le désir de la vérité". Thus, La Rochefoucauld uses humour to unmask hypocrisy, just as Molière did.[16]

However critics have not limited their suggested influences on the work to Stoicism. Hippeau has put forward a detailed argument in favour of an Epicurean reading of the *Maximes.* He suggests that Augustinianism and Epicureanism share a belief in *amour-propre,* whereby mankind seeks to satisfy his own desires and ends.[17] He explains that Epicureanism was a second source of pessimism in seventeenth-century France, and one which also attacked both Stoicism and the weakness of mankind.[18] However, in contrast to the Christian form of pessimism, Epicureanism had no need of God's grace to overcome man's corrupt nature. Epicureans preferred to use "des moyens purement humains" in order to turn the world to their own advantage.[19] Hippeau asserts that La Rochefoucauld is thus attempting to teach the art, albeit "assez difficile", of using our *amour-propre* in our own interests.[20] He also argues that in carrying out such a work, La Rochefoucauld is merely following Montaigne, a writer who asserted that "les vertus à pratiquer sont celles que l'usage et la tradition prescrivent".[21] Hippeau argues that La Rochefoucauld was an Epicurean rather than a Jansenist.

It is difficult, however, to accept Hippeau's conjectures, especially when he states that La Rochefoucauld did not wish to appear to be expounding ideals taken from classical Epicureanism, as this would have led to his condemnation at a time when libertines were openly denounced.[22] This is almost impossible to believe, especially when we consider how much criticism there is in the *Maximes* aimed at philosophers and philosophy itself. Furthermore Hippeau's belief that La Rochefoucauld would rather have appeared to be "l'ami de jansénistes"[23] than an Epicurean seems absurd: Jansenism was continually assaulted and vilified by the French Church and government. That anyone would want, at

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[16] Pierre Campion, *Lectures de La Rochefoucauld,* Rennes, 1998, p.26
[17] Derek A. Watts, *La Rochefoucauld,* p.55
[18] Louis Hippeau, *Essai sur la morale de La Rochefoucauld,* Paris, 1967, p.8
[19] Ibid, p.9
[20] Ibid, p.10
[21] Ibid, p.48
[22] Ibid, p.69
[23] Ibid, p.112

this time, to be thought a Jansenist without actually being one is almost ridiculous. It is also difficult to see how he could be justifying *amour-propre* when he condemns it so completely.

This denunciation plays a vital role in La Rochefoucauld's work. Watts believes that, although the word *amour-propre* is itself only mentioned explicitly 21 times in the 1678 edition of the *Maximes*, the presence of the concept is "sensed almost everywhere".[24] Jansenist theologians saw self-love as one of the greatest failings of mankind. If Adam had loved God more than he had loved himself and his own curiosity, then he would not have brought about his own fall. Augustine's *De Civitate Dei* also propounds this concept and depicts the struggle between *amor Dei* – love of God – and *amor sui* – self love.[25] This theme is one of the better known in the *Maximes* and has led Watts to comment that La Rochefoucauld calls into question "the whole conventional notion of sincerity".[26] Whenever the duc mentions a supposed virtue, he explains that it is often motivated by self-interest. Thus, in *maxime* 264 of the 1678 edition he states that "la pitié est souvent un sentiment de nos propres maux dans les maux d'autrui; c'est une habile prévoyance des malheurs où nous pouvons tomber". Supposed virtues are therefore exposed as merely an extension of man's self-love; sincerity is hard to find.

Watts states that judgements such as these are central to the "Augustinian tradition of moral judgement". An act is driven by virtue if inspired by charity, but by sin if it is driven by *amour-propre*.[27] However this tradition cannot be applied wholly to La Rochefoucauld, since he denounces man's acts as inspired by self-love but fails to emphasise the possibility of a more Christian intention of true love for others. Many critics have seen the lack of Christian doctrine within the *Maximes*: Odette de Mourgues has stated that the study of man within the work is "non-religious", whilst La Rochefoucauld has no central system of ethics to put forward.[28] Furthermore Bénichou comments that the vast majority of "la littérature morale" of the seventeenth century written in France appears to be centred on the

[24] Derek A. Watts, *La Rochefoucauld*, p.26
[25] Ibid
[26] Ibid, p.25
[27] Ibid, p.26
[28] Odette de Mourgues, *Two French Moralists: La Rochefoucauld and La Bruyère*, Cambridge, 1978, p.4

"problème de la grandeur de l'homme ou de sa bassesse";[29] such studies are therefore not confined to supposed Jansenist works.

Despite the assertions of some critics, the centrality of *amour-propre* to the work as a whole has come to be questioned. Lewis states that numerous *maximes* do not even mention it, with other themes such as friendship and passion appearing more frequently.[30] Despite this assertion, he does also note that the descriptions of *intérêt*, *vanité*, *orgueil*, and other such words, are simply a manifestation of *amour-propre* by another name.[31] Even Watts, who makes many comments on the positive evidence of the Jansenist influence on the work, declares that the *amour-propre* of La Rochefoucauld has lost its "explicit theological overtones" and has acquired a more psychological perspective instead, which pervades the work and emphasises the egoism of man.[32] He has taken a religious idea and has secularised it.

Whilst some may argue that this does not preclude a Jansenist reading, it can do nothing else. It is impossible to believe that the strict piety of the Jansenists would have allowed them to believe in the corruption of mankind in purely secular terms. For them, the reason for man's self-interest was original sin; the Fall did not allow him to act in any other way. To say that man is motivated by self-interest is not Jansenist; to say that he is motivated by self-interest because of the influence of original sin *is* Jansenist. Furthermore Watts argues that the Jansenist conception of virtue was such that it could not be genuine unless it was "inspired by the love of Christ".[33] This view of the possibility of virtue is nowhere to be found in the *Maximes*, which further suggests that a Jansenist reading of the text is problematic.

As will be shown later, there are still various positive elements within the work, a fact acknowledged by Watts when he states that despite the "deep-rooted pessimism" of the *Maximes*, La Rochefoucauld never quite succeeds in "negating his instinctive belief in the

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[29] Paul Bénichou, *Morales du grand siècle*, Paris, 1948, p.129
[30] Philip E. Lewis, *La Rochefoucauld*, Ithaca; London, 1977, p.56
[31] Ibid, p.57
[32] Derek A. Watts, *La Rochefoucauld*, p.27
[33] Ibid, p.37

possibilities of human effort". He goes on to declare that the cynicism so often emphasised within the duc's work is overplayed.[34] Man may be motivated by self-love for the majority of the time, but some type of virtue is evidently possible in some situations. Thus the depiction of *amour-propre* and virtue in La Rochefoucauld is certainly pessimistic, but it does not appear to be Jansenist.

Equally important to the *Maximes* is the depiction of the nature of passion, particularly its destructive power. Lewis describes the "imperious power" of the passions to determine man's conduct:[35] the weakness of mankind is emphasised through our inability to resist passion and all it entails. This is of course a very Jansenist theme. Without the aid of God, man is weak and unable to resist that which will bring about his own destruction. Without any outside help man follows his passions in an empty attempt to gain some kind of happiness. The power of the passions draws the sinner inevitably into pain and anguish, into a circle of destruction which, without God's help, he can never escape.

It is obvious that many critics should explain any hint of Jansenist tendency within the work as proof of Jacques Esprit's influence. Watts quotes the beginning of *maxime* 9 ("les passions ont une injustice et un propre intérêt qui fait qu'il est dangereux de les suivre") as evidence of the affect of Esprit's clearly Jansenist work, *La Fausseté des vertus humaines*, on La Rochefoucauld.[36] However, as will become obvious, this is not necessarily irrefutable evidence of the Jansenism of the work, since the nature and strength of passion were very popular themes in themselves during the seventeenth century. Thus in Corneille there are various studies into the nature of passion with respect to duty, *gloire*, and love. The concept of strong passions is only Jansenist when it is combined with the idea that man's nature is wholly corrupt. As this is not the case in the *Maximes*, it can only be assumed that La Rochefoucauld was not wishing to assert the Jansenist view of the passions.

[34] Derek A. Watts, *La Rochefoucauld*, p.49
[35] Philip E. Lewis, *La Rochefoucauld*, p.75
[36] Derek A. Watts, *La Rochefoucauld*, p.17

Certain critics have also recognised La Rochefoucauld's use of irony within the *Maximes*. Watts demonstrates this by commenting that it occasionally means that he is in fact defending vices which he appears to be criticising. Thus in *maxime* 36 there is actually a justification of pride: "il semble que la nature, qui a si sagement disposé les organes de notre corps pour nous rendre heureux, nous ait donné l'orgueil pour nous épargner la douleur de connaître nos imperfections".[37] For Watts, this statement is a "possible tongue-in-cheek defence of what Christianity has always regarded as man's fundamental sin".[38] Such use of irony hardly seems compatible with a Jansenist reading of the work. It is difficult to imagine Saint-Cyran stating that man's pride and lack of self-knowledge are things about which we can joke, and which may not be quite as appalling as some would have us believe. It seems impossible that such a thing could occur, for one quality possessed by most Jansenists seems to have been their inability to soften their doctrines, even in the face of criticism and accusations of heresy. Thus it is already evident that a Jansenist interpretation of the work is far from obvious.

As has been stated, the *Maximes* exist in various different forms and it is interesting to trace the development of La Rochefoucauld's thought. It could be argued that the possibility of a Jansenist reading of the work declines with each new edition. The first written edition, known as the Liancourt manuscript, has been described as portraying "unimpeachable orthodoxy" and necessitating a "theocentric interpretation" of the text,[39] and it is therefore this version of the work that will be studied first. It is true that God is evoked in various *maximes* of this manuscript, which suggests that La Rochefoucauld intended the message to be at least partially Christian. In *maxime* 45 he states that "Dieu seul fait les gens de bien", whilst in *maxime* 55 he describes how it is God that "tient seul tous les cœurs des hommes entre ses mains, et qui, quand il lui plaît, en accorde les mouvements, fait aussi réussir les choses qui en dépendent". The wording of this *maxime* could be said to demonstrate the Jansenism of the work most profoundly: God alone holds our destiny within His hands; He is the only one able to save us from our state of sin.

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[37] Derek A. Watts, *La Rochefoucauld*, p.47
[38] Ibid, p.17
[39] Ibid, p.41

Man cannot perceive the true motivation of any action: "il n'y a que Dieu qui sache si un procédé net, sincère et honnête, est plutôt un effet de probité que d'habileté" (*maxime* 155). It is God who has given us our various talents (*maxime* 190), a concept which emphasises how pitiful and useless we are without help. Even the devil is mentioned, for it is he who has "placé la paresse sur la frontière de plusieurs vertus" (*maxime* 209). Finally in *maxime* 256 La Rochefoucauld appears to give his strongest Jansenist statement when he comments that "Dieu a permis, pour punir l'homme du péché originel, qu'il se fît un dieu de son amour-propre, pour en être tourmenté dans toutes les actions de sa vie". After the Fall we deserve nothing but punishment for our betrayal.

However, it is not simply references to God which suggest a Jansenist reading of the *Maximes*. Further evidence comes in the form of the depiction of the nature of mankind. The very first *maxime* of this manuscript explains that man is not what he first seems: "l'enfance nous suit dans tous les temps de la vie. Si quelqu'un paraît sage, c'est seulement parce que ses folies sont proportionnées à son âge et à sa fortune".

This message is continually reaffirmed. For example, in *maxime* 16, La Rochefoucauld criticises philosophers by commenting that "la constance des sages n'est qu'un art avec lequel ils savent enfermer dans leur cœur leur agitation"; they are not as great as they may seem. This denunciation is continued later in the work: in *maxime* 59 he comments that "les philosophes, et Sénèque sur tous, n'ont point ôté les crimes par leurs préceptes; ils n'ont fait que les employer au bâtiment de l'orgueil". Thus they are deceived in their belief in the possibility of pagan virtue. This is a concept that was emphasised by Saint-Cyran and his followers, although it was not confined to Jansenist belief.

Furthermore, in *maxime* 62 La Rochefoucauld criticises philosophers' attitudes towards riches, by telling the reader that they "ne condamnent les richesses que par le mauvais usage que nous en faisons". They believe that riches do not in themselves incite vice, and thus do not understand man's nature properly. This would suggest that La Rochefoucauld is allying himself with the Jansenists, who would undoubtedly see the amassing of wealth as a thing which can only bring evil. Man is drawn irrevocably to sin and depravity and would

therefore only use such wealth in the worst possible way. He emphasises his contempt for philosophers by stating that they are lying to themselves when they say that they do not require wealth themselves. They simply do this because they are poor and wish to make it seem that they are rejecting wealth (*maxime* 89).

Finally, in *maxime* 208, the philosophers' attitude towards death is criticised: we are told that "rien ne prouve tant que les philosophes ne sont pas si bien persuadés qu'ils disent que la mort n'est pas un mal, que le tourment qu'ils se donnent pour éterniser leur réputation". These criticisms of Stoicism, and philosophy in general, could be used to support for a Jansenist reading of the text, since La Rochefoucauld is rejecting those belief systems which paid no heed to God. He wishes to demonstrate that philosophers who had established a more human order of morality were merely cheats and liars whose arguments can be destroyed easily.

It is not only philosophers who are deceiving, or indeed themselves deceived: mankind as a whole is forever condemned to be blind to the truth of its own existence. In fact, the depiction of self-love and its associated vices is strong in this version of the *Maximes*. This is partly because of *maxime* 94, a fairly long discourse on the nature of *amour-propre*, which was edited out of later editions of the work. La Rochefoucauld describes this love as "l'amour de soi-même et de toutes choses pour soi". It is devious in that nothing is "si caché que ses desseins", whilst "ses transformations passent celles de la métamorphose". It is hidden from even the most perceptive eyes and grows secretly without our knowledge. Nothing is as strong as "ses attachements", but they can change "selon le changements de nos âges, de nos fortunes et de nos expériences". It is "capricieux", "bizarre", and can be found "partout", even in those people who appear pious.

La Rochefoucauld portrays *amour-propre* as a disease which eats away at man, destroying his soul. Its importance is emphasised by the fact that its true actions and affects are described at great length in various other *maximes*. For example, *maxime* 2 describes how

> L'orgueil a bien plus de part que la charité aux remontrances que nous faisons à ceux qui commettent des fautes, et nous les en reprenons bien moins pour les en corriger que pour persuader que nous en sommes exempts.

This idea is emphasised again in *maxime* 3, which states that "ce que nous prenons le plus souvent pour des vertus ne sont en effet que des vices qui leur ressemblent, et que l'orgueil et l'amour-propre nous ont déguisés". Self-interest guides our actions continually, so that "nous nous persuadons souvent d'aimer les gens plus puissants que nous; l'intérêt seul produit notre amitié". We only make friends in order to gain something for ourselves. When we appear to be virtuous, we are not; the supposed virtue is false. For example, "la modestie qui semble refuser les louanges n'est en effet qu'un désir d'en avoir de plus délicates" (*maxime* 20).

Even when we praise others it is for the sake of our own interests: "nous choisissons souvent des louanges empoisonnées, qui découvrent, par contre-coup, des défauts en nos amis que nous n'osons divulguer" (*maxime* 29), whilst even our *générosité* is really a "désir de briller par des actions extraordinaires" (*maxime* 40). Friendship is not free from impurity either, since "l'amitié la plus sainte et la plus sacrée n'est qu'un trafic où nous croyons toujours gagner quelque chose" (*maxime* 22). Furthermore pity for others is merely concern for the *malheurs* into which we ourselves may fall at any point (*maxime* 51), whilst humility is used "pour soumettre effectivement tout le monde; c'est un mouvement de l'orgueil, par lequel il s'abaisse devant les hommes, pour s'élever sur eux" (*maxime* 53). When our friends are troubled we do not cry for them, but rather for our own affliction and "la diminution de notre bien, de notre plaisir ou de notre considération", which demonstrates our hypocrisy (*maxime* 57).

Even monarchs and princes are motivated by *amour-propre*, since "la clémence des princes est une politique dont ils se servent pour gagner l'affection des peuples" (*maxime* 83). Indeed there are so many *maximes* that criticise our conduct in some way, including comments on moderation (*maxime* 77), civility (80), sobriety (87), fidelity (90), and death (188), that they are too numerous to mention. They all combine to give a very bleak picture of man and his inner motivation. Every single action is seemingly carried out for his own

purpose and to satisfy his own will. As in Jansenist doctrine, man can only act for himself; he is drawn continually towards evil and self-love.

The strength of man's passions is strongly emphasised within the Liancourt manuscript. La Rochefoucauld states that, although many believe that other passions can be overcome by love and ambition, it is only "la paresse" which will succeed in conquering them. It is this which "usurpe insensiblement sur tous les desseins et sur toutes les actions de la vie" and which eventually "éteint toutes les passions et toutes les vertus" (*maxime* 84).

The power of the passions, and their ability to change men, are further underlined in *maxime* 119, which explains that "la passion fait souvent du plus habile homme un sot et rend quasi toujours les plus sots habiles". This statement is interesting in that it almost suggests that passion has a positive affect in some; yet this is only further proof of its Promethean nature, rather than a suggestion that it is something constructive. Instead, the passions are "les seuls orateurs qui persuadent toujours" (*maxime* 127). Their strength is seen by La Rochefoucauld as affecting man's spiritual life, a fact which gives us one of the strongest indications of the affect of Jansenism on the author. This is portrayed in *maxime* 144, which states that

> la santé de l'âme n'est pas plus assurée que celle du corps, et quelque éloigné que nous paraissions être des passions que nous n'avons pas encore ressenties, il faut croire, toutefois, que l'on n'y est pas moins exposé qu'on l'est à tomber malade quand on se porte bien.

La Rochefoucauld also emphasises man's inability to gain true self-knowledge, and in *maxime* 6 he states that "il est aisé de connaître les qualités de l'esprit, et difficile de connaître celles de l'âme". He believes that it is easier for us to know others than it is for us to know ourselves. Thus we hate to be deceived by others, but are often happy to deceive ourselves: "on est au désespoir d'être trompé par ses ennemis et trahi par ses amis, et on est toujours satisfait de l'être par soi-même" (*maxime* 10). This is further emphasised in

maxime 13, where it is stated that "il est aussi aisé de se tromper soi-même sans s'en apercevoir, qu'il est difficile de tromper les autres sans qu'ils s'en aperçoivent". We pass so much time attempting to hide our true nature from others in order to gain their esteem that in the end "nous nous déguisons à nous-mêmes" (*maxime* 101). This theme could be used to support a Jansenist reading of the work: fallen man has no idea of what really motivates him.

This blindness is the most dangerous affect of our pride, and it leaves us unable to see "toutes nos misères et tous nos défauts" (*maxime* 114). Here again it appears that La Rochefoucauld is emphasising the true baseness of mankind; we have sunk so low that we are unable to see, or admit to ourselves, the great corruption which has taken over our nature. Without the aid of God we are unable to achieve true enlightenment. In reality, we would rather accept the "louange qui [nous] trahit" than "le blâme qui [nous] sert" (*maxime* 161). Finally in *maxime* 143 we are told that "ce qui nous empêche souvent de bien juger des sentences qui prouvent la fausseté des vertus, c'est que nous croyons trop aisément qu'elles sont véritables en nous". Man is completely lacking in self-knowledge.

The concept of the heroic man is also denied in these *Maximes*: La Rochefoucauld states that

> l'amour de la gloire et plus encore la crainte de la honte, le dessein de faire fortune, le désir de rendre notre vie commode et agréable, et l'envie d'abaisser les autres, font cette valeur qui est si célèbre parmi les hommes (*maxime* 33).

Thus the so-called hero is not the great man whom we may envisage at first; his reasons for action are far from heroic. This point is underlined in *maxime* 126, which states that "la guerre d'Auguste et d'Antoine, qu'on rapporte à l'ambition qu'ils avaient de se rendre maîtres du monde, était un effet de la jalousie". Even such great figures do not have a pure motivation behind their actions. Although a superficial view of these concepts may suggest that La Rochefoucauld was emphasising the disappointment felt within the aristocracy over the failure of the *Frondes*, it is more likely, and certainly more in fitting with the other

concepts depicted within the *Maximes*, that he was trying instead to underline the notion that man is not heroic at all, and indeed never has been.

However despite all these proofs of the bleak position of mankind, even this first manuscript of the *Maximes* still offers some positive elements which render the outlook of the author a little less pessimistic. La Rochefoucauld emphasises the idea that man can do certain things for himself with the aid of his own will, as demonstrated in *maxime* 14: "rien n'est impossible de soi; il y a des voies qui conduisent à toutes choses, et, si nous avions assez de volonté, nous aurions toujours assez de moyens". It could be argued that there is no positive element here: La Rochefoucauld may have meant that we *do not* possess "assez de volonté", thus this is what renders some actions impossible to us. However, he has clearly stated at the beginning of the *maxime* that nothing is impossible. This implies that sometimes we may not have the *volonté* to carry out certain actions, but sometimes we obviously will. Although the tone of the *maxime* remains predominantly negative, there still exists some hope for man, something which does not wholly fit with the Jansenist viewpoint.

There are also other positive statements to be found, including the *maxime* that considers the usefulness of jealousy. La Rochefoucauld states that

> la jalousie est raisonnable en quelque manière, puisqu'elle ne cherche qu'à conserver un bien qui nous appartient...au lieu que l'envie est une fureur qui nous fait toujours souhaiter la ruine du bien des autres (*maxime* 27).

In addition, "la parfaite valeur" is an extremity which is rare (*maxime* 54), but this suggests that it is a possibility, despite other cynical statements concerning bravery and heroism. There is also a possibility of true love: in *maxime* 117 La Rochefoucauld states that "il n'y a point d'amour pure et exempte du mélange de nos passions, que celle qui est cachée au fond du cœur et que nous ignorons nous-mêmes". We may not know it ourselves, but true love is possible. These positive statements demonstrate that, like Pascal, La Rochefoucauld

admits that man is not entirely bad. Since he does not put forward this concept whilst emphasising the need for God's help, he does not ally himself with the Jansenists.

Generally speaking, it could be said that a Jansenist reading of this version of the *Maximes is* possible. However this statement cannot be made wholeheartedly and without numerous reservations. Firstly, although the duc does write about God, the references are far from numerous: original sin is depicted in only one *maxime* out of a total of 272. The fact that God is mentioned only six times clearly downplays the theocentric interpretation which Watts describes. *Amour-propre* and vice in general are emphasised on countless occasions, but this is never overtly attributed to man's fallen state, despite the inferences which could be made. The reader may perceive suggestions that herein lies the cause, but this is never once explicit, which leads to the conclusion that any such analogy is uncertain at best, and impossible at worst. If La Rochefoucauld had been trying to produce a Jansenist work, he would have stated that our earthly failings are attributable to original sin. He does not depict mankind as irretrievably lost in sin, unable to act kindly without the grace of God. Instead he shows man to be selfish, self-centred, sometimes evil, yet always with the slight hint of a possibility of something better.

It is fair to say that La Rochefoucauld does proffer Christian ideas: he recognises that it is God who endows us with certain powers, and that we are far from pure as a race. However any true Jansenist would have taken care to emphasise the fallibility of man without God. He would also underline the fact that only the few elect would be able to see this truth. This cannot be so in the case of this work, since the author is at pains to show that other forces are operating within our world. For example the inclusion of Fortune as a determining force within this text has been upheld as proof of its anti-Christian nature.[40] *Maxime* 31 declares that "quelques grands avantages que la nature donne, ce n'est pas elle, mais la fortune qui fait les héros", whilst *maxime* 343 states that "pour être un grand homme, il faut savoir profiter de toute sa fortune...". Furthermore, whilst it is nature which gives us merit, it is Fortune which "le met en œuvre" (*maxime* 79). A true Christian would not have given any credence to such beliefs.

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[40] Derek A. Watts, *La Rochefoucauld*, p.42

The purpose of the work is clearly not to instruct the reader or to bring him closer to God. The real aim is still diversion of a sort, even though this may be educational in nature. These *Maximes* were obviously affected by La Rochefoucauld's friendship with Esprit, yet he does not go as far as Pascal had done to incorporate Jansenist ideas into his work. Whilst it does draw on popular themes that were being debated at this time, there is no incontrovertible evidence that it was his plan to make these ideas the central tenet of his *Maximes*.

Thus it is possible to conclude that whilst this first manuscript is certainly pessimistic, it is far from being incontrovertibly Jansenist. However, as has been stated, this version of the *Maximes* is far from definitive, so what differences can be perceived in the other versions? Does La Rochefoucald become more Jansenist? Does he even become more Christian? In order to answer these questions, the first printed version of the work will be studied. This pirated edition of the *Maximes* appeared in Holland in 1664. The most obvious distinction between this edition and the Liancourt manuscript is that it is much shorter and contains only 188 *maximes* as opposed to the 272 of the first manuscript. Whilst many of the *maximes* concerning *amour-propre* and vice remain the same, what little emphasis there was on God, and His affect on the nature of man, has been reduced. It could be argued that the editor of this pirated edition made these changes, but since they are not rectified in later editions, this is unlikely. It seems more probable that La Rochefoucauld was working on a new version of the work, which was then pirated.

God is still mentioned: *maxime* 14 explains, as did the earlier version of the work, that "Dieu seul...tient tous les cœurs des hommes entre ses mains, et...peut quand il lui plaira en accorder les mouvements". In addition *maxime* 60 states again that "Dieu a mis des talents différents dans l'homme". La Rochefoucauld has also retained *maxime* 157, which declares that "il n'y a que Dieu, qui sache si un procédé est net, sincère, et honnête". In this edition of the *Maximes*, God is mentioned a mere three times. Furthermore, the overt statement on original sin has been removed, and instead replaced with a vaguer reference to the fact that the nature of man has changed:

> Une preuve convaincante, que l'homme n'a pas été créé comme il est, c'est que plus il devient raisonnable, plus il rougit en soi-même, de l'extravagance de la bassesse, et de la corruption de ses sentiments et de ses inclinations (*maxime* 66).

Whilst this is still a Christian message, La Rochefoucauld is emphasising the fact that man's nature is not what it was once without explaining why this may be. It is certainly less Jansenist than the statement on original sin made in the Liancourt manuscript. It is interesting that the author no longer seems able to confirm the obvious link between man's fallen nature and Adam's sin, but instead dissociates sin from his current state. A true Jansenist would not have missed an opportunity to describe how man's nature is nothing but his own fault, a punishment passed down after Adam's fall. Instead La Rochefoucauld suggests that mankind is not as pure as he once may have been.

In fact he even goes as far as to make some criticism of those who claim to be religious. In *maxime* 84 he declares that "quelque industrie que l'on ait à cacher ses passions sous le voile de la piété et de l'honneur, il y a toujours quelque endroit qui se montre". Obviously whilst it cannot be suggested that La Rochefoucauld is in any way anti-Christian or indeed anti-religion, it is interesting that whilst criticising false piety in some, he does not emphasise true piety in others. This is crucial, for if he were a true Jansenist, he would have been unable to resist the temptation to declare the true piety of that movement.

The criticism of mankind, however, remains strong in this edition of the work. Indeed the very first *maxime* states that

> les vices entrent dans la composition des vertus, comme les poisons entrent dans la composition des remèdes de la médecine: la prudence les assemble, et les tempère, et elle s'en sert utilement, contre les maux de la vie.

Thus our virtues remain far from pure; they are still guided by a corrupt motive. Yet it is important to note the tone of this first statement: there is now a certain positive element, however small it may be. Who could argue against the fact that cures are helpful and even essential, something for which we should be grateful, no matter from what they are made? Thus, in the same way, virtue is something beautiful and great no matter how it may be created. Through this comparison La Rochefoucauld has shown the reader that his self-interest may taint virtue, but it by no means destroys it. Some may argue that La Rochefoucauld has taken this idea from Augustine: Book Eleven of *De Civitate Dei* states that "even poisons, which are disastrous when improperly used, are turned into wholesome medicines by their proper application".[41] However it is more likely that he has taken the idea from Montaigne, who also asserts that "les vices...trouvent leur rang"; they are necessary, just like "les venins à la conservation de notre santé".[42]

This is not to say that mankind is totally redeemed in this edition of the *Maximes*. La Rochefoucauld still presents a view of man as essentially corrupt and full of *amour-propre*. For example, in *maxime* 2, the duc tells his reader that "la vertu des gens du monde est un fantôme formé par nos passions, à qui on donne un nom honnête, pour faire impunément ce qu'on veut". *Maxime* 3 states that "toutes les vertus des hommes se perdent dans l'intérêt, comme les fleuves se perdent dans la mer". This is indeed a very strong opening to the edition and certainly provides a harsh condemnation of man. Heroism is denied with even greater vehemence than in the Liancourt manuscript. La Rochefoucauld describes how it is merely "la vanité et la honte, et surtout le tempérament" which makes up the "valeur" of heroes (*maxime* 112). Simple soldiers are depicted as less than heroic because their actions only form part of "un métier périlleux" which they have taken to earn a living (*maxime* 117). Men expose themselves to war just enough to save their honour, but not enough to fulfil their duty totally (*maxime* 118). Heroism is a fallacy; every supposedly heroic action has a hidden motive.

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[41] Saint Augustine, *The City of God against the Pagans*, translated by Henry Bettenson, London, 1984, p.453
[42] Michel de Montaigne, *Les Essais*, Paris, 2001, p.1233

Amour-propre is also of the utmost importance, and it is interesting that the longest *maxime* of the work – number 110 – is that depicting the affects of the self-love which forces men to become "les tyrans des autres". In this way the idea of the ruling nature of *amour-propre* is placed at the centre of the depiction of mankind. Although the view of man is no less harsh than in the Liancourt manuscript, it is certainly less centred on any theological explanation for the state in which mankind finds himself. La Rochefoucauld never states that this corruption is inherent in our nature. Whilst he remains fixed on the idea of human fallibility, it appears that he was able to admit that all was not quite as impossibly depressing as it may first appear. Indeed many positive elements have been inserted into this text: *maxime* 21 states that "rien n'est impossible: il y a des voies qui conduisent à toutes choses...", whilst it is also suggested that few people know "le véritable mérite", since only those "qui ont de belles qualités apparentes" can reach it (*maxime* 52). La Rochefoucauld is suggesting that true merit is indeed possible, an assertion which one cannot imagine a Jansenist making without any reference to God and divine grace.

Whilst he criticises the passions for their "propre intérêt", he declares that it is "la charité seule" which can say "quasi tout ce qu'il lui plaît et de ne blesser jamais personne" (*maxime* 82). This statement is important as not only does it suggest the possibility of charity existing, but also because it is a human action which is positive, with only positive affects. Even "l'intérêt" can have a constructive affect on occasions, for whilst it blinds some it is "tout ce qui fait la lumière des autres" (*maxime* 160). Self-interest continually motivates man to act in his own best interests, but the air of condemnation seems somehow weaker than in the Liancourt manuscript. This is because the fragile references to any theological cause for man's depravity have been cut away, leaving the work with only three references to God. Human failings are not seen as a punishment from God, but merely characteristics of a fallible entity. Thus, if we are to conclude that the author is less Christian, we must by necessity conclude that he is also less Jansenist. His intention is to show the fallibility of humanity without referencing this nature to original sin.

One interesting point to note is that in February 1665, La Rochefoucauld wrote a letter to Père Thomas Esprit in which he repeated many of the concepts that are inherent in the

Maximes. He states that "la vertu des anciens philosophes païens....a été établie sur de faux fondements", whilst he believes that

> l'on n'a pu trop exagérer les misères et les contrariétés du cœur humain pour humilier l'orgueil ridicule dont il est rempli, et lui faire besoin qu'il a en toutes choses d'être soutenu et redressé par le christianisme.[43]

His purpose in writing these *Maximes*, he claims, was to attack pride (p.630). This letter was written after the publication of the pirated edition of the work, and clearly acts a defence against any criticisms La Rochefoucauld had encountered. However, the fact that he defends his work as an essentially Christian one does not strictly necessitate a Jansenist reading of the text. He does not make any such reading totally explicit within the work itself. It is also perfectly plausible that he later changed the tone of the work, so that even if this first printed edition were intended to be particularly Christian in nature, following editions may were not.

After this first pirated edition of the *Maximes*, there were a further four editions printed within the lifetime of the author, all much longer than these first two versions. Perhaps those *maximes* added in these editions demonstrate a greater propensity towards Jansenism. Did La Rochefoucauld regret the secularisation of his work, and move towards a more obviously theocentric message? The *Préface* to the second edition of 1666 – and indeed that of the later editions published in 1671, 1675 and 1678 – would certainly seem to suggest this. Here, he speaks of the "fondement" of the *maximes* and how he only considered them with reference to men who are "dans cet état déplorable de la nature corrompue par le péché". He adds that the virtues he criticises are not those "que Dieu préserve par une grâce particulière". In other words, he does not criticise Christian virtue, only human virtue. Such a statement seems odd: little reference was made to such matters in the first two versions of the work. Does this then mean that these subsequent editions were more theocentric?

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[43] La Rochefoucauld, *Œuvres complètes*, Introduction par Robert Kanters, Paris, 1964, p.630

In order to carry out this study, the 1678 edition will be studied, as this is considered to be the definitive text of the work. Few changes were made between these later versions, the only major one being the addition of over a hundred new *maximes* by this final edition. The condemnation of man is most certainly still apparent, as is emphasised by the first *maxime*, where La Rochefoucauld states that

> ce que nous prenons pour des vertus n'est souvent qu'un assemblage de diverses actions et de divers intérêts que la fortune ou notre industrie savent arranger, et ce n'est pas toujours par valeur et par chasteté que les hommes sont vaillants et que les femmes sont chastes.

Immediately he introduces his condemnation of apparent virtue, although the use of the word "fortune" leads the reader to believe that some situations that arise may not always be entirely due to man's own doing. This suggests that La Rochefoucauld cannot possibly have imagined a Jansenist slant to this edition, for he is immediately demonstrating that it is not God, or even man, who influences every outcome.

The tone of the *Maximes* is still overwhelmingly pessimistic. For example pride is condemned with particular vehemence. We are told that if we had no pride ourselves, we would not condemn it in others (*maxime* 34), whilst we have been given pride by nature "pour épargner la douleur de connaître nos imperfections" (*maxime* 36). This last comment is most interesting for two reasons: firstly, there is no mention of God, instead these are characteristics which have been bestowed on us by nature; secondly, La Rochefoucauld fails to comment that the only true way we could know ourselves, and these imperfections, is through the grace of God. A true Jansenist would indeed have seized on this concept to underline their own doctrine. La Rochefoucauld does not do this, which suggests that he has other motivations.

One of the *maximes* to be found in the two earlier versions of the work which mentions God has been altered, and now omits Him altogether. Thus, *maxime* 170 states that "il est difficile de juger si un procédé net, sincère et honnête est un effet de probité ou d'habilité".

Instead of telling the reader that God alone can discern the nature of our actions, La Rochefoucauld describes how it is difficult for man himself to know these things. This is of the utmost importance, since he has purposefully removed God entirely from the situation. This rather precludes the possibility that he aimed to give a Jansenist view in his work.

Furthermore the assertion in *maxime* 44 that "la force et la faiblesse de l'esprit sont mal nommées; elles ne sont, en effet, que la bonne ou la mauvaise disposition des organes du corps" can be seen as a suggestion that some of our characteristics are ruled by our propensity towards one of the four humours, rather than, as a Jansenist would say, evidence of our state as descendents of Adam and his sin. This idea is again underlined in *maxime* 297, which states that "les humeurs du corps ont un cours ordinaire et réglé, qui meut et qui tourne notre volonté". This further suggests that there are other influences acting upon us and guiding our nature rather than the simple idea of determining sin handed down from Adam. It is unlikely that he would put forward this information if he were trying to put forward a religious view.

La Rochefoucauld emphasises the idea that there are other forces exerting an influence on man. *Maxime* 58 describes the "étoiles heureuses ou malheureuses" which affect the reception of his actions; this suggests that events may be governed by some supernatural force. Since no mention is made of God, this is not Jansenist in any way. A Jansenist would have emphasised that the elect few were predestined to succeed in attaining salvation, whilst the rest of mankind would be damned. No such assertion is made. This pagan idea of fate is emphasised further when La Rochefoucauld asserts that "la fortune tourne tout à l'avantage de ceux qu'elle favorise" (*maxime* 60). Fate definitely did not play any role in the Jansenist world-view.

Additional evidence against a Jansenist reading can be found in *maxime* 112, which states that "les défauts de l'esprit augmentent en vieillissant, comme ceux du visage". Such a statement could be interpreted as meaning that it is only with age that corruption comes: with youth comes purity, an idea which is incompatible with the doctrine of original sin. If man had inherited his corruption from the time of the Fall, then he would always be

corrupt, unless bestowed with divine grace. He cannot become more corrupt as he ages because he is born in utter sin.

There are certain references made which could be argued to prove some sort of Christian intention by La Rochefoucauld. For example, *maxime* 341 mentions salvation and suggests that "les passions de la jeunesse ne sont guère plus opposées au salut que la tiédeur des vieilles gens", an addition to the work that first appeared in the 1675 edition.[44] *Maxime* 504, one of the longest *maximes* in the 1678 edition, appears to have fairly Christian overtones, in that it condemns the "mépris de la mort" professed by pagans. La Rochefoucauld tells the reader that there are many who try to persuade themselves that death is not an ill, but no sensible person can ever have believed this to be true. However for all the criticisms of philosophers and their attitudes towards death given here, he fails to mention the Christian attitude to death and the possibility of salvation for the happy few. In fact these few *maximes* in total can hardly be said to constitute a theocentric message. They may provide a slight suggestion of religion but they do not suggest true and loyal Christianity and do not profess Jansenism in any way at all.

Despite the lack of religious assertions, the reader cannot conclude that La Rochefoucauld wished the reader to view man as any less corrupt, whatever the cause for this corruption. There are many more allusions made to *amour-propre* in this 1678 edition of the *Maximes* than in earlier versions. *Maxime* 2 describes how "l'amour-propre est le plus grand de tous les flatteurs". It is often the cause of some men's supposed fidelity, in that by attempting to appear loyal, they are merely acting "pour attirer la confiance" and to rise above others (*maxime* 247). In their passions, especially in their love for others, it is "l'amour de soi-même" which reigns (*maxime* 262). It is interesting that despite the lack of religious fervour in the later editions of the work, the condemnation of philosophers, and Stoics in particular, is also especially strong. As well as criticising their false "constance" (*maxime* 20), La Rochefoucauld also tells his reader that "la philosophie triomphe aisément des maux passés et des maux à venir, mais les maux présents triomphent d'elle" (*maxime* 22). Their motivation is forever false and they are misguided in their beliefs. In *maxime* 46 we are told that

[44] Derek A. Watts, *La Rochefoucauld*, p.41

> l'attachement ou l'indifférence que les philosophes avaient pour la vie n'était qu'un goût de leur amour-propre, dont on ne doit non plus disputer que du goût de la louange, ou du choix des couleurs.

After this consideration of the 1678 text of the *Maximes*, it seems odd that La Rochefoucauld should differentiate between those virtues that are possible through the grace of God and those that are not. In the work itself he does not mention the possibility of Christian virtue at all. If he truly intended to prove that supposedly pagan virtue was impossible, why are there positive elements within the work? Indeed why has all mention of God been removed from the work altogether? Only the author himself knows why he should have provided such a preface. Perhaps it was to protect himself from claims of irreligion and lack of piety; perhaps it was to pacify his Jansenist friends at the salon of Madame de Sablé. It is not at all evident why he should have allowed a preface so discordant with the work to remain at its head, but what is certainly true is that it does not reflect the work itself. This version of the *Maximes* appears barely Christian, let alone Jansenist.

La Rochefoucauld's lack of religious outlook is emphasised further when we consider the *Réflexions diverses*, which were not published until 1731. This work comprises twelve short reflections on various subjects – for example *Du vrai* and *De la confiance* – none of which pertain to religion. The author depicts how any given subject can have "plusieurs vérités" (*Du vrai*), a fact which reminds us very much of the difficulty of accepting anything without further investigation. In the fifth *Réflexion, De la confiance*, sincerity is shown to be "un amour de la vérité, une répugnance à se déguiser". However, man gives his confidences to others merely through vanity and "par envie de parler".

Despite this, the tone of the *Réflexions diverses* is not entirely moralistic; they are also a guide to the necessities of social conduct. Thus the second *Réflexion, De la société,* is a description of the rules needed within social circles to maintain happy relationships. The

reader is told that "il serait inutile de dire combien la société est nécessaire aux hommes", since everyone "veut trouver son plaisir et ses avantages aux dépens des autres". Furthermore society needs to be "réglée et soutenue par le bon sens, par l'humeur, et par les égards qui doivent être entre les personnes qui veulent vivre ensemble". Members of society should have certain qualities, in order that good relationships can exist. For example it is necessary to contribute as much as possible to the *divertissement* of others, whilst also excusing the failings of friends without letting them see that their faults have ever been noticed. Furthermore there is "une sorte de politesse" which is needed in society amongst *honnêtes gens*, whilst such people should also have "de la variété dans l'esprit". Finally, although different people do have varying interests, these interests should not be too "contraires" for the sake of society. Thus the reader is presented with advice far removed from that given in the *Maximes*: La Rochefoucauld is not interested in the causes and nature of morality, but rather the necessities of a good and happy social circle.

The advice in the other *Réflexions* continues in a similar manner and lays emphasis on society as opposed to morality. Thus in the third *Réflexion, De l'air et des manières*, the reader learns that the reason why individuals fail to please is often because "personne ne sait accorder son air et ses manières avec sa figure, ni ses tons et ses paroles avec ses pensées et ses sentiments". Furthermore in the following *Réflexion* the author explains that if human conversation is seldom agreeable, this is because "chacun songe plus à ce qu'il veut dire qu'à ce que les autres disent". Men are advised to "dire des choses naturelles", whilst avoiding talking too long about themselves. It is not right to want to be always in charge of a conversation; instead man should try to touch on "tous les sujets agréables qui se présentent".

The inclusion of these rules of social conduct is of the utmost importance. Many Jansenists, including Saint-Cyran, had described the necessity of withdrawal from society, even if this withdrawal was not total. How could any reader reconcile such demands of piety with a description of the best ways to succeed in social circles? The answer is that it cannot be done; the possibility of Jansenist reading of this work is also unlikely, however pessimistic La Rochefoucauld's thought may be.

It is interesting to see how the nature of La Rochefoucauld's works progressed over several years and editions. God and Christianity as a whole become less and less prominent, until the *Maximes* become an almost wholly secular work. It seems strange that La Rochefoucauld would wish to negate the affects of religion in later versions. It could be said that his motivation was fear of the censors, and wishing for his work to be published no matter what the cost, he excluded God so that his work would not be banned. This argument would hold little sway if La Rochefoucauld were a true Jansenist; he would care little for censorship and would have thought nothing of portraying his true views. It is evident that Arnauld and Nicole had few concerns of this type: the true message of religion was the most important thing for them to convey. If La Rochefoucauld had destroyed this message merely to have his work printed, it would have been an unforgivable action.

However it is not possible to view La Rochefoucauld as a Jansenist, and even in the Liancourt manuscript, he does not seem openly and overtly religious. As has been shown, he was even criticised in the *sondage* for his lack of piety. So what other reason should he have for removing God? One probable suggestion is that, whilst the duc was helped by the Jansenist Jacques Esprit in his composition of the original *Maximes*, this influence was absent in later years. This demonstrates the fact that when this influence was removed he simply reverted to his own beliefs, which did not include Jansenism.

This lack of Jansenism in La Rochefoucauld's work is emphasised when a similar, but undoubtedly less successful, work is taken into consideration. As has been stated, the Liancourt manuscript of the *Maximes* was written with partial help from Jacques Esprit. Born in 1611, Esprit later entered the *Oratoire*, and his beliefs were distinctly Augustinian. Not content with helping his friend on the *Maximes*, he decided to compose his own work, *La Fausseté des vertus humaines*. He died in July 1678, just before the book was published.

Despite the similarities between his work and that of La Rochefoucauld, Esprit has never really enjoyed the same level of success as his friend. In recent years, La Rochefoucauld has remained popular, yet *La Fausseté* is hardly read, except by students of Jansenism.

Horowitz has stated that "at no moment of French literary history has Jacques Esprit been favored with critical appreciation".[45] This would seem to suggest that there is something which renders it less popular; this factor is its Jansenism. This idea is also supported by the fact that many critics believe him to be "too didactic".[46] As will be seen, Esprit's work is so overtly Jansenist that it becomes repetitive and dry; it lacks the psychological insight of its rival and instead asserts its religious doctrine. Esprit sets out to prove that man lies to others and to himself, whilst giving the greatest criticism to the Stoics: for Esprit, Seneca is the "père des menteurs".[47] In fact the Jansenism of this work merely serves to confirm the lack of Jansenist leanings to be found within the *Maximes*.

In the preface to his edition of Esprit's work, Quignard states that both La Rochefoucauld and Esprit had the same intention: "tout d'abord démasquer la sagesse antique, ensuite disqualifier les vertus modernes une à une" (p.19). However they do not have the same intentions at all. La Rochefoucauld does criticise the Stoics, and does deny apparent virtues, but he does it all in a very different way from Esprit. The Jansenist's aim is to destroy these beliefs in order to emphasise his Jansenist doctrine as the one true dogma; this is not La Rochefoucauld's intention. Instead, the latter shows no alternative to man's self-love, but merely leaves us to decide for ourselves in a much less dogmatic way.

From the very beginning of the *La Fausseté des vertus humaines* the true message of the work is evident. In the opening paragraph to his *Préface,* Esprit states that it is only "la fausse persuasion" which tells us that "c'est par raison, par bonté, par justice et par générosité que les hommes font les actions qui leur paraissent raisonnables, justes, bonnes et généreuses" (p.73). Man is immediately shown to be both false and corrupt. He cannot find anything that is truly worthy of approbation, so he simply settles for that which has "quelque apparence de l'être" (p.74). Esprit condemns philosophers for their ignorance of "l'état véritable du cœur humain"; they believed that reason guided and governed them, but for Esprit this has all changed (p.76). Now man is motivated only by "intérêt, ou par

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[45] Horowitz, Louise K., *Love and Language: A Study of the Classical French Moralist Writers*, Columbus, 1977, p.113
[46] Ibid
[47] Jacques Esprit, *La Fausseté des vertus humaines, précédé de Traite sur Esprit*, Pascal Quignard (ed), Paris, 1996, p.18

vanité" (p.78), an idea further emphasised during the first chapter of the first volume. Here the reader learns that of all of God's works, the greatest and most worthy of admiration is man; whilst animals merely "vont aveuglément à leurs fins", man is responsible for all his own actions. However this is also his downfall, a gift which is "funeste" and causes "sa ruine de même que sa félicité". Mankind is blind and follows the path to "les richesses et les honneurs" rather than what would actually be good for him (pp.83-84).

According to Esprit, nothing shows how ridiculous man is more than the fact that he is so easily deceived by "des opinions populaires": he continually swaps "une erreur à une autre" (pp.85-86). Here we have the beginnings of the outline of his Jansenist doctrine: man was created in glory, in the image of God Himself, but without divine intervention he has been drawn irrevocably to blindness and self-interest. Indeed the emphasis which Esprit places on religion is underlined by the sheer number of times he refers to God by name, even in this very first chapter. For example he gives the reader following advice:

> Si le découragement qui arrive quelquefois aux plus vaillants capitaines, montre que Dieu est l'arbitre et le maître souverain du succès des armes, la confusion et la soudaine éclipse de leurs lumières en est une preuve bien plus sensible (p.92).

In addition it is God alone who has the power to ensure victory in battle and certainly not "l'ordre des batailles, la multitude des combattants, la résolution des soldats...l'expérience des chefs" (p.93). Moreover, kings are not responsible for peace in their kingdoms; this is only kept through the power of God. Thus it is "aussi peu possible" to stop the changing of kingdoms as it is "d'empêcher les révolutions des astres et des saisons" (p.100). Esprit was not attempting to denounce the monarchy in any way, but was rather stating that all successes were precipitated with the help of God.

It is also interesting to note that he comments in this first chapter that those men who are "les plus avisés et les plus prudents" (p.101) are often not rewarded with the success for

which they wait. Perhaps this could be considered to be a reference to Louis XIV: many Jansenists believed that he followed an anti-Jansenist policy because he was being badly advised, rather than because he would be truly against their doctrines. Finally in this chapter, the author declares that it is not an "aveugle destin" which rules the earth, nor merely fortune which rewards some men and destroys others (p.109), a suggestion which was put forward by La Rochefoucauld in the *Maximes*. Thus, by the end of Esprit's first chapter the reader is left in no doubt that it is God alone who rules all in His infinite power.

This dogmatism on the part of Esprit is carried through the entire work. It would take far too long to list every mention he ever makes of God and religion, but there are many examples which are of great importance in a study of the Jansenist nature of the work. In the third chapter of the first volume, entitled *La sincérité*, Esprit describes the nature of man before the Fall. He explains that "l'homme dans sa première institution aimait la vérité par le respect qu'il avait pour Dieu et pour demeurer dans son ordre" (p.123). In his present state, however, this has changed and he now only tries to appear sincere because of "cette autorité que nos paroles acquièrent par l'opinion qu'on a de notre sincérité" (p.124). The reader can therefore ascertain the affects of original sin on man's nature, a very Jansenist theme indeed. It is only the true Christian who can posses a sincerity which can claim to be "vertueuse" (p.125). Furthermore, in keeping with Jansenist doctrine, thus reminding us of the sisters at Port-Royal, Esprit underlines the importance of humility, a virtue which he states is undervalued. It is only through this virtue that true Christians can recognise themselves as sinners and become "tellement convaincus que le mépris leur est dû". Here the reader can see the Jansenist doctrine of fallen man deserving a terrible punishment: separation from God.

This concept is also emphasised by the language used in *La Fausseté*, which is much more condemning than that used in the *Maximes*. Esprit continually uses words such as "lâche", "criminelle" and "corrompu" to describe various parts of man's nature. Man cannot experience true friendship because he is too weak "pour résister à la violence des passions" (p.289-290). It is only "la grâce de Jésus-Christ" which can rescue man from such a state

and save him from "l'esclavage des passions" (p.257). The mention of divine grace is, of course, central to a Jansenist reading of the work; without God's help men are nothing. Esprit also recalls the teaching of Saint Augustine, by declaring that true humility is "une vertu si particulière aux chrétiens" (p.262), whilst his criticism of false oracles in chapter 26,[48] *La fidélité des sujets envers leur souverain*, is certainly reminiscent of Augustine's *De Civitate Dei*. However it should be noted that criticism of oracles is not purely an Augustinian theme; it is also found in the works of Hobbes and Montaigne.[49] Esprit is at pains, however, to distance himself from what he sees as false followers of Augustine. He criticises the "hérésies de Luther et de Calvin", which have been allowed to spring up, perhaps partly because of "l'ignorance des principales maximes de notre religion" (p.299). Again the reader can discern Esprit's Jansenist leanings: many Jansenists wished to return to the purity found in the doctrines of the Early Church and regretted recent deviations from these teachings.

There are many more examples of Esprit's Jansenism in the second half of the first volume. In the opening statement to this the section, the author declares that "il n'est point de précepteur, quelque sage et capable qu'on l'imagine, qui soit si propre à corriger l'homme, que son orgueil" (p.323). The theme of pride – undoubtedly a Jansenist theme – is of continual importance to Esprit, since it is the cause of so many of man's faults. It is this same pride which is the cause of "les sages du paganisme" (p.323), men who deserve nothing but condemnation in the eyes of a Jansenist. Man is only able to act through self-love and pride; those who seem to abstain from drink or food are not truly fasting from any kind of virtue, but rather because they wish to avoid afflictions such as "la sciatique...la goutte...la gravelle" (p.336). In addition those who need less sustenance because of "la petitesse de leur estomac, ou l'humidité de leur complexion" make others believe that they eat little due to their powers of self-regulation (p.337). Once again, the Jansenist has shown

[48] For example, Esprit states that oracles have deceived people by "l'obscurité et l'ambiguïté de leurs réponses"; only the Holy Ghost has been able to provide a true and divine prophecy.

[49] Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, A.D. Lindsey (ed), London, 1959, p.58. In the twelfth chapter of *Leviathan*, Hobbes comments that the Gentiles have made men falsely believe that they can find their future in the purposefully ambiguous answers from oracles such as the one at Delphi. The Gentile leaders have done this as a means of enslaving the people to follow the will of the governments. In addition Montaigne commented that even before the birth of Jesus the oracles had begun to "perdre leur crédit" (Michel de Montaigne, *Les Essais*, p.97).

that man continually tries to appear something which he is not: *amour-propre* rules his life. Thus it is only "la tempérance chrétienne" which should be seen as a virtue, since it is much more noble than "la tempérance des philosophes" and regulates men's actions through faith rather than through self-love (p.338).

Esprit also states that this *amour-propre* is so strong that it has "rendu tous les hommes de vrais tyrans"; man is "fier, farouche et inhumain" (p.361). The strength of the passions is corrupting, thus opinions "saines et raisonnables" are held by very few men. This means that only popular opinions are allowed to "régner et triompher en tout temps" (pp.372-373). Perhaps this is a reference to the fact that at this point Jansenism had never been a popular movement; it certainly was not before the eighteenth century, by which time it had lost much of its religious motivation, exchanging this for a more legalistic impetus. The statement certainly does suggest that popular ideas cannot really be considered to be wholly made up of the truth. Thus, Esprit can claim that opposition to Jansenism was wrong because, as a minority movement, its ideas were true rather than popular.

One source of popular opinion, the royal court, is depicted by Esprit as the epitome of human failings. Here man emphasises his inability to overcome his passions and the strength of his ambition. The self-love of the courtiers is underlined by

> les mépris et les rebuts qu'ils souffrent, les continuelles inquiétudes où ils sont pour leur fortune, et les chagrins mortels qu'ils ont de ne point réussir et de voir prospérer les autres (p.381).

According to the Jansenist, courtly life is the exact opposite of the life of the Christian, which has no need of intrigues or plans and is therefore "bien plus heureuse" (p.384).

Finally Esprit criticises the Stoic philosophy that suicide can be a noble act if a man is faced by public condemnation or is suffering from "douleurs opiniâtres et violentes" (p.413). He also condemns Montaigne's argument that any "horrible attentat sur sa propre vie" can be "une action belle en soi" (p.412). The Christian must abhor such an action

because "le meurtre est un crime qui blesse les lois de Dieu", which suggests that suicide is an even more objectionable act (p.413). In this respect Esprit's views are similar to those advanced by Saint-Cyran is his *Question royale*; only God has the right to declare when to end life. For Esprit the philosopher's belief that he is set aside from the ordinary man by "certaines qualités rares et excellentes" is entirely false (p.426), whilst the greatest supposed virtues are "les plus fausses" (p.428). The falsity of such philosophers is shown by the fact that they cannot even agree amongst themselves. Thus "les plus sages des stoïciens se sont moqués des exagérations d'Épicure", whilst the latter "a trouvé les stoïciens ridicules quand ils ont avancé quelque chose d'approchant de ce qu'il a lui-même enseigné" (p.494).

There are many echoes within *La Fausseté des vertus humaines* with La Rochefoucauld's work, something which the reader would undoubtedly expect because of the authors' friendship. Esprit tells the reader that man is "aveuglé par son intérêt" (p.112), a concept depicted in the *Maximes* on numerous occasions. However the difference between the two works lies in the fact that Esprit continues by commenting that it is only Christians who "aiment et...cherchent la vérité d'une manière pure, sincère et vertueuse" (p.119). He also states that people act only to help themselves – "on sert pour être servi" (p.130) – another idea to be found in the *Maximes*. However for the Jansenist true friendship *is* possible, indeed it is a "vertu divine", but only to be found in Christians, since the source of this friendship is God (p.134). Whilst La Rochefoucauld believed that true friendship was a rarity amongst all men, Esprit can only emphasise its existence within a religious context.

He also takes this opportunity to condemn Montaigne for his views on the subject, which were apparently even worse than those held by Seneca and Cicero. His fault, according to Esprit, was that he asserted the existence of "non seulement de vraies amitiés, mais aussi des amitiés où l'on s'oublie entièrement pour n'avoir d'attention que pour celui qu'on aime" (p.136). For the Jansenist, friendship is impossible when considered in a God-less context. This is also emphasised by Esprit's assertion that when our friends die, we do not cry for them, but rather for what we have lost, whilst some women cry when their husbands die because they wish to act in accordance with their social status (p.232). Whilst the

Maximes express this very sentiment, they fail to convey the idea, found here, that it is only "la tristesse des chrétiens" which is true and "véritablement vertueuse" (p.236). Once more, it is only those who know God who can act without any trace of self-interest.

Again like La Rochefoucauld, Esprit attributes man's motivation to *amour-propre*: in a chapter on *La complaisance* the reader is told that "l'amour-propre est l'auteur de toutes les vertus purement humaines" (p.153). The difference from La Rochefoucauld is again that Esprit makes sure to comment that it is only human-inspired virtue which is so motivated; divine virtue is obviously of a very different order. La Rochefoucauld never explicitly suggests such a distinction, except in his preface to the *Maximes* and there appears to be no real evidence that he held this belief strongly.

The similarities with the work of La Rochefoucauld continue into the second volume of *La Fausseté des vertus humaines*. For example, just as the *Maximes* condemned heroes as false and motivated by pride or sense of honour, Esprit denounces the "pouvoir sur soi" which is the supposed characteristic of heroes. In reality it is merely "l'orgueil" that gives heroes any power over their feelings; they believe their status as heroes is one of "des demi-dieux", and above all they wish to retain this status (p.324). This cannot be something laudable, since God would never approve such a "folie": as Esprit tells us "c'est par la vertu et non pas par un vice aussi grand qu'est l'orgueil, qu'il veut qu'on détruise les passions" (p.327).

He continues by again criticising Montaigne, and his claims that Socrates was never subjected to any kind of concupiscence. According to Esprit, Montaigne's claims merely served to prove "combien cet auteur était aveugle et peu instruit des vérités de la religion chrétienne", since he suggested that a pagan philosopher could be "plus pur et plus parfait que n'ont été les apôtres". In true Jansenist style, the main criticism of this assertion is that even the apostles, who had been given the grace of Christ, could never fully shake off their concupiscence (p.325). As Jansenius had suggested in the *Augustinus*, even the elect could find themselves without grace at any given point, and as men they could never be without sin.

Esprit concludes the first chapter of the second volume by stating that true Christians do not wish to appear heroic through their supposed control of the passions, but rather try to overcome their passions through true subjugation to God (p.327). The condemnation of philosophers for their pagan beliefs is a theme continually emphasised in this volume, just as it was emphasised in the *Maximes*. However Esprit's assertions are of a more Christian nature. In addition to the criticism of Montaigne, there is also further censure for the Stoics; their condemnation of all pleasures suggests that nothing can be enjoyed with innocence (p.331), an idea destroyed by the existence of simple Christian pleasures. Aristotle is rebuked because he believed that passions should only be denounced because they are "extrêmes"; once they have been moderated by virtue, passions are "dignes de louange" (p.332). For a Jansenist such as Esprit this would certainly be an impossible concept; only God can help man to contain his passion through the gift of grace and without this gift, there is nothing in mankind that can be considered laudable. Thus whilst Esprit and La Rochefoucauld may deal superficially with the same subjects, their intentions and meaning are completely different.

However it is not only the content of *La Fausseté des vertus humaines* which underlines the Jansenism of its author. Its very structure adds to the work's dogmatism, since Esprit uses it to underline his religious assertions. Each chapter deals with one particular virtue, its causes, its falseness, and then the possibility of Christian virtue. In every chapter the reader is presented with an apparent virtue, which is then displayed as false, only to be built up again within the confines of Christianity. The overwhelming message of the work is that without God, virtue is impossible. Whilst La Rochefoucauld gradually eradicated the name of God from his work, Esprit "clora chaque chapitre sur la référence à Dieu"[50]. God is the cornerstone of *La Fausseté*. The work is pervaded with Jansenist doctrine; for Esprit, original sin has corrupted mankind irrevocably.

However it is assertions such as these which render the work less readable. Towards the beginning of the work it is interesting to see how Esprit justifies his beliefs and destroys the

[50]Jacques Esprit, *La Fausseté des vertus humaines*, p.41

pagan virtue emphasised by various philosophers. However after only a few chapters it is easy to become weary of the dryness of the text. The reader who has no interest in Jansenism, or does not hold similar beliefs, will find little of interest. It is the repetition of the work which renders its reading tiresome. On the other hand, La Rochefoucauld's work is often witty and provides the non-religious reader with hope for his own nature. Esprit's work is unrelenting and, in truth, offers little merit for the modern literary critic.

The most evident difference between the two authors is that La Rochefoucauld wrote to be read and enjoyed, whereas his friend wrote to instruct. *La Fausseté des vertus humaines* is thoroughly based on the Jansenist world-view; the *Maximes* are evidently not. In this case it seems evident that the Jansenist doctrine and literature were barely compatible. It seems more likely that it is from other thinkers, such as Montaigne, that many of La Rochefoucauld's ideas came, rather than from the Jansenist faith. The concept of imperfection in man, along with the questioning of his motivation, is not restricted to this particular religious doctrine but had been prevalent throughout much of history.

Thus, in conclusion, it is finally obvious that a Jansenist reading of the *Maximes* is definitely "inadequate as a total explanation of their meaning",[51] although it is probably also true that it is "rash to dismiss altogether the religious background" to the work.[52] Through various comparisons, it is evident that La Rochefoucauld's discussion of man is neither the first, nor the last, of its kind. The nature and morality of man was a popular subject throughout the entire period, as has been demonstrated through the study of Esprit. A discussion of morality need have no theological overtones. Vivian Thweatt has suggested that it is La Rochefoucauld's study of *amour-propre* that allies him most strongly with the Jansenists,[53] yet there is no evidence to support this assertion. La Rochefoucauld never once shows that he favours this form of piety over any other; in fact, he does not show himself to be particularly Christian.

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[51] Jacques Esprit, *La Fausseté des vertus humaines*, p.46
[52] Odette de Morgues, *Two French Moralists*, p.5
[53] Vivian Thweatt, *La Rochefoucuald and the Seventeenth-Century Concept of the Self*, Geneva, 1980, p.99

Furthermore Susan Reed Baker has made the important point that La Rochefoucauld's refutation of Seneca and Stoicism shows that his beliefs "ne se fonde pas sur une seule morale – soit l'épicurisme, soit l'augustinisme – mais présente plutôt un mélange original de vues qui lui sont propres".[54] In truth writing as a *moraliste* and writing as a Jansenist are two very different things. As Gérard Bauër has commented, from Montaigne to Gide, "l'œuvre des écrivains français, dans son ensemble, est une œuvre des moralistes".[55] Moreover Jean Rohou has stated that the period from 1660 until 1680 saw "une crise fondamentale de la condition humaine", whilst all of the greatest authors from this period "ont une vision nettement pessimiste et parfois tragique de l'homme et de la vie sociale".[56] This suggests overwhelmingly that the harsh view of humanity prevalent at this time amongst authors such as La Rochefoucauld can be attributed to a particular section of history: the cause was not necessarily Jansenism. The seventeenth century may have been the "siècle de saint Augustin",[57] but this was far from the only determining force present during this century. Indeed the debate of self-love and self-knowledge had been "central to moral philosophy since Socrates" and became important again in the Renaissance, particularly in the works of Erasmus, Rabelais and Montaigne.[58] Therefore the themes found in the *Maximes* are ones continually emphasised throughout moral philosophy and cannot be considered as solely "Jansenist" themes.

It has been shown that La Rochefoucauld produced many versions of his *Maximes*, each time eradicating just a little more of their religious nature. It is my assertion that he did this in order to render his work more accessible to a wider readership. It is only a very small minority who would have wished to read a work with a stark Jansenist nature, as is shown by the limited success of Esprit's work in comparison to that enjoyed by Montaigne and La Rochefoucauld. What separates his works from that of Esprit is the purpose for which they

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[54] Susan Reed Baker, *Collaboration et originalité chez La Rochefoucauld*, Florida, 1980, p.39
[55] Bauër, Gérard (ed), *Les moralistes français, La Rochefoucauld, La Bruyère, Vauvenargues, Chamfort, Rivarol, Joubert, Choix de textes et préface par Gérard Bauër*, Paris, 1962, p.9
[56] Jean Rohou, 'La Rochefoucauld, témoin d'un tournant de la condition humaine', *Littératures classiques*, 35 (Jan 1999), pp.7-35 (p.7)
[57] Philippe Sellier, 'La Rochefoucauld, Pascal, Saint Augustin', *Revue d'Histoire Littéraire de la France*, 69 (1969), pp.551-575, p.551
[58] Andrew Calder, 'La Fontaine and La Rochefoucauld: the Other as Reflection of the Self', *Seventeenth-Century French Studies*, 17 (1995), pp.37-51, p.39

were written. The duc is making comments on what he sees as human failings: he does not provide any solutions for these problems. In this way his purpose is not to guide the faithful but rather to entertain society regulars. Indeed each of the faults he highlights are faults which can disrupt the operation of the social gatherings at which he was often present. His work is more of a guide for the socialite, a guide which would help men to integrate into that society. It is certainly not a doctrinal work which aims to direct the faithful in their religious development. La Rochefoucauld's aim was not to forward the Jansenist cause, whatever that cause may have been. La Rochefoucauld was affected by the debates surrounding the movement in a general way; he certainly did not wish to portray any specific doctrine.

CHAPTER FOUR: MADAME DE LAFAYETTE

After the theatre, the literary genre which received the greatest criticism from the Jansenist movement was the novel. As one of the most important proponents of the novelistic form in the seventeenth-century, Mme de Lafayette could therefore be seen as the antithesis of a true Jansenist follower. However it is sometimes suggested that her connections to the religious movement, along with the somewhat pessimistic depiction of life within her works, show that this is a conclusion which is far from certain. As with the other writers, it is Mme de Lafayette's biographical details which appear to give the greatest arguments in favour of a Jansenist reading of her work. The extent to which these connections influenced her work is open to debate.

Mme de Lafayette had a great deal of experience of the court. She was a lady-in-waiting to Anne of Austria and later became an intimate of Henriette d'Angleterre, who even asked her to write her memoirs. These were important factors in her development: they provided the backdrop against which she would set her novels. Indeed, the life of Henriette, and her love for the duc de Guise, was said to provide the basis for her 1662 work, *La Princesse de Montpensier*.[1] This was the first of various works published during her lifetime: *Zaïde* was published in 1669/70, whilst her most famous novel, *La Princesse de Clèves*, appeared anonymously in Paris in 1678. This last work is generally accepted to be the fruit of a collaboration between Mme de Lafayette, La Rochefoucauld and Segrais, which dated back to around 1672.[2] After her death another work, *La Comtesse de Tende*, came to light and was eventually published in 1724.

However it is her acquaintance with various Jansenist figures which, for some, is the most important influence on her life. In 1650, a year after the death of her father, her mother remarried, this time to Renaud de Sévigné. At the age of fifty-three her stepfather underwent a religious conversion and, according to Duchêne, he repented of "sa vie pécheresse". He was in correspondence with Angélique Arnauld and wished to follow the spiritual direction of Singlin. Accordingly, he placed himself under the direction of the Jansenists.[3] After her own marriage, Madame de Lafayette was a friend

[1] Stirling Haig, *Madame de Lafayette*, New York, 1970, p.25
[2] Charles Dédéyan, *Madame de Lafayette*, Deuxième édition, Paris, 1965, p.86
[3] Roger Duchêne, *Mme de Lafayette: La romancière aux cent bras*, Paris, 1988, p.162

of the Du Plessis-Guénégauds and frequented their salon at the Hôtel de Nevers, which, according to Haig, was a "centre of literary, social and political life, and a foyer of...Jansenist doctrine".[4] Indeed, both Racine and Boileau had read their work there.[5] It was here too that Mme de Lafayette became interested in works such as Nicole's *Essais de morale* and Pascal's *Pensées*.[6] She had an "admiration ardente" for this latter work and denounced Nicole's criticism of its style.[7] She also condemned "l'esprit et le style" of his *Traité de la comédie* so vehemently that Nicole was forced to reply "avec quelque ironie et une certaine amertume".[8] However it seems that she was on better terms with other Jansenists: many years later, after the death of most of those close to her, she took up correspondence with various members of the movement.[9]

Despite these facts, there seems to be little evidence that she followed, or even accepted, these beliefs herself. Haig has stated that in reality Mme de Lafayette "had never been a religious person...and neither were her friends, except for Mme de Sévigné".[10] According to Raitt, there appears to be some evidence that she took at least small steps towards a more religious existence later in her life. Around 1686 she began to correspond with Rancé, a Jansenist priest, and apparently confessed to him her desire for a more religious existence.[11] However, too much emphasis should not be laid on this development since it appears that she did not find this relationship "sufficiently fruitful" and began instead to correspond with du Guet, a Jansenist sympathiser who was altogether more worldly.[12] Even when she did turn to religion, the Jansenist form of piety appears to have been much too strict for her. In addition, her biographical details do not hold the sole key to her works, as the level of her own actual input into the novels is not clear.[13] The extent to which the movement's ideas can have penetrated her novels must therefore be questioned.

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[4] Stirling Haig, *Madame de Lafayette*, p.28
[5] Janet Raitt, *Madame de Lafayette and* La Princesse de Clèves, London, 1971, p.34
[6] Ibid, p.35
[7] Emile Magne, *Le Cœur et l'esprit de Madame de Lafayette: Portraits et documents inédits*, Paris, 1927, p.178
[8] Ibid, p.279
[9] Pierre Malandain, *Madame de Lafayette:* La Princesse de Clèves, Paris, 1985, p.17
[10] Stirling Haig, *Madame de Lafayette*, p.53
[11] Janet Raitt, *Madame de Lafayette and* La Princesse de Clèves, p.54
[12] Ibid, p.55
[13] John Campbell, 'Round Up The Usual Suspects: The Search for an Ideology in *La Princesse de Clèves*', *French Studies*, LX, Number 4 (2006), pp.437-452 (p.439)

As her most famous and celebrated work in modern times, *La Princesse de Clèves* is the most important to this study. However it should be noted that it was not as successful during the seventeenth century, being reprinted only three times.[14] If Mme de Lafayette had really intended to portray some sort of Jansenist perspective in any work, then it would be most evident here, since this is her most developed work. This is particularly true because she was helped in its composition by members of Madame de Sablé's salon, where Jansenism was popular.

However, despite the fact that some critics do see this work as a depiction of Jansenist beliefs, the question remains open to some extent. It is certain that her experiences at court provided her with a great deal of material for the work. Haig comments that she had learnt that "the court game of sentimental hide-and-seek was a metaphor for duplicity", whilst the "inter-play of appearance and reality was a parable of self-deception and self-knowledge".[15] Since this is one of the most important themes to be found in *La Princesse de Clèves*, it suggests that courtly life as Madame de Lafayette saw it was a more important influence on her than Jansenism.

From the very opening sentence of this novel, the reader is alerted to the dichotomy which the narrator portrays in the world he describes. We are told that "la magnificence et la galanterie n'ont jamais paru en France avec tant d'éclat", whilst every day the court is filled with "des parties de chasse et de paume, des ballets, des courses de bagues, ou de semblables divertissements".[16] The glory and splendour of the court can be contrasted with the frivolous lifestyle of those who reside there. Their lives are filled with those occupations to which the Jansenists – and Pascal – were opposed. Immediately the reader is able to apprehend that the lives of those about to be portrayed are hardly great, or even worthy in any way. The mediocrity of the characters can be set against the backdrop of immense wealth and power.

However Mme de Lafayette does not go so far as to suggest that it is this wealth and power which have in fact engendered such mediocrity. What she does suggest is that the beauty of these characters is in direct opposition to their moral nature. The reader learns

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[14] Erica Harth, *Ideology and Culture in Seventeenth-Century France*, New York, 1983, p.213
[15] Stirling Haig, *Madame de Lafayette*, p.26
[16] Madame de Lafayette, *La Princesse de Clèves*, K.B. Kettle (ed), New York, 1967, p.4

that "jamais cour n'a eu tant de belles personnes et d'hommes admirablement bien faits". It appears as if nature has taken care "à placer ce qu'elle donne de plus beau dans les plus grandes princesses et dans les plus grands princes" (p.5). The courtiers to whom we are about to be introduced may be the most beautiful, but from a moral point of view they are far from being the most pure. This is highlighted by the author's depiction of Nemours, who is described as "un chef-d'œuvre de la nature" (p.6). This beauty is to be contrasted with his morality, which is lax by any standards. He is continually unfaithful to many women: "il avait plusieurs maîtresses, mais il était difficile de deviner celle qu'il aimait véritablement" (p.7). Madame de Lafayette instantly gives the idea that Nemours may be attractive physically, but is far from being so morally. He has many female followers, but in fact he does not seem to love any of them. His lifestyle is completely reprehensible.

From the outset the court is portrayed as a place of danger. Scott sees it as "representing symbolically the conditions within which the passions flourish". For these people, marriage is not a union based on love but rather forms the basis for political or economic alliances. Scott explains that "sexual relationships are usually formed outside marriage".[17] This is all the more important when the first appearance of Mlle de Chartres is considered. She is described as "une beauté parfaite, puisqu'elle donna de l'admiration dans un lieu où l'on était si accoutumé à voir de belles personnes" (p.10). In a world of beauty, Mlle de Chartres is still to be singled out, initially because she is physically attractive, but later because the reader comes to see that she is in some ways morally superior to her contemporaries.

It is interesting that she is portrayed as so beautiful, since the reader assumes that she could attract any man she wanted. In some ways, this is what becomes her downfall. Her feelings for Nemours could have been more easily suppressed had he not been instantly attracted to her too. The moral to this story appears to be that it is easier to maintain a high moral ground if one is ugly and not subject to temptation! Yet however glib this assertion may seem, there is some underlying truth in it. A man such as Nemours would not single out an ugly woman when he could have any number of

[17] J.W. Scott, *Mme de Lafayette:* La Princesse de Clèves, London, 1983, p.25

beauties, whilst a young girl would not find herself so tortured if the man she loved did not reciprocate these feelings.

The seemingly unparalleled beauty of Mlle de Chartres means that her situation at court is a most precarious one, a fact that her mother seems to have taken into consideration. Since the girl's father had died whilst she was still young, her mother had decided to educate her herself in the hope that she would be able to avoid the moral pitfalls of a corrupt society. She aimed to give her daughter "la vertu" and hoped to "la lui rendre aimable". In order to achieve this she told her of "le peu de sincérité des hommes, leurs tromperies et leur infidélité". At the same time, however, she has attempted to emphasise "quelle tranquillité suivait la vie d'une honnête femme" and what glory virtue could give "à une personne qui avait de la beauté et de la naissance". She took care to underline the fact that it is difficult to "conserver cette vertu" and asserted that the only way in which she could be happy would be to "aimer son mari et d'en être aimée" (pp.10-11).

This aid continues once the young girl is ready to appear at court. Indeed it is all the more necessary in a place "si dangereux", where "personne n'était tranquille, ni indifférent". The sole purpose of every courtier is to gain all that he can from his surroundings (p.14). In this way, the life which Mme de Chartres has planned for her daughter gives a striking contrast to the life normally led by those at this court. If Mlle de Chartres is to be virtuous, she must cultivate herself in order to act contrary to the expected norm.

However, the Princesse's mother appears to have a limited amount of faith in her daughter's abilities to lead a more virtuous life. Even before she realises the danger posed by Nemours, Madame de Chartres urges her "non pas comme sa mère, mais comme son amie, de lui faire confidence de toutes les galanteries qu'on lui dirait" (p.15). It seems that this partial lack of faith is based on the fact that her daughter is still young; she does not yet have the advantages which age bring.

Mlle de Chartres is described as having "le cœur très noble et très bien fait" (p.19), yet she remains ignorant of what courtly life is like, despite all her mother's warnings. She does not foresee the unhappiness which will inevitably result from her marriage to a

man she cannot love. She believes, like her mother, that M. de Clèves possesses "tant de grandeur et de bonnes qualités" and asserts "qu'elle l'épouserait même avec moins de répugnance qu'un autre, mais qu'elle n'avait aucune inclination particulière pour sa personne" (p.19). Despite her advice that the best way to happiness was to love one's husband, and be loved by him, Mme de Chartres has no scruples in giving her daughter "à un mari qu'elle ne pût aimer" (p.20). This is not without significance, since it highlights the fact that even she is motivated in some ways by ambition, despite her generally austere views.

In fact when she is searching for a husband for her daughter, Mme de Chartres does not seem to give any thought to finding someone she may love, but rather feels that it is more important to marry her off to a man who is considered as a suitable match. Once all her other plans have been thwarted, she marries her daughter to the next suitable candidate. The fact that he loves Mlle de Chartres is almost entirely beside the point. It is also important to note that this love is more likely to be based on lust: the reader is informed that when he first sees Mlle de Chartres, the Prince de Clèves is struck by her outstanding beauty. The feelings which first appear spring from lust, rather than true love. None of the characters are exempt from the corrupt passions, no matter how they may attempt to differentiate their behaviour from that of the other courtiers.

The real cost of this early loveless marriage becomes evident to the Princesse de Clèves only when she encounters Nemours for the first time. She acknowledges his attractive physical nature unwittingly when she tells her first lie: she refuses to state that she knows exactly who he is, despite never having met him. She attempts to deflect the guilt she feels on this occasion by blaming her mother for gaps she now perceives in her education. She explains to her, "je me plains...que vous ne m'ayez pas instruite des présentes et que vous ne m'ayez point appris les divers intérêts et les diverses liaisons de la cour" (p.26). In some ways, there is some truth in this assertion, yet it is also important that at this early stage the Princesse does not wish to accept responsibility for her actions. This is further highlighted by her reluctance to inform her mother of "ce qu'elle pensait des sentiments de ce prince...sans avoir un dessein formé de lui cacher, elle ne lui en parla point" (p.31). When she does finally decide to confess all to her mother, the latter is too ill. Her repentance has come too late.

Yet although the Princesse is denied the confession and absolution she so desperately desires, her mother already recognises the moral peril in which she finds herself. Whilst Mme de Chartres accepts her death, her one regret is the danger in which she leaves her daughter. She believes that the Princesse will be in a situation which necessitates the presence of a watchful mother. Once again, it is obvious that Mme de Chartres is not wholly sure of the virtuous nature of her daughter. Her final words seem to suggest that if she were to have lived, her daughter may not have been led by temptation in the same way: she could have guided her better. This is important because Mme de Lafayette makes no suggestion that there will be another, heavenly, force watching out for the Princesse once her mother dies.

This would have been a most opportune moment for the author to introduce various religious themes into the work, but she does not. Mme de Chartres does not suggest that her daughter pray for the strength and virtue which she will need. She merely urges her, in a secular way, to rely on her own virtue which has been instilled from birth. The mother's remarks also suggest that the only reason that the Princesse de Clèves has acted virtuously up until this point is that her mother has been helping her do so. It seems to point to the conclusion that there is little true virtue to be found within her at all. If Mme de Lafayette had really wanted to depict some sort of Jansenist doctrine, then surely she would have emphasised that with God's help, virtue is a possibility. Instead she underlines the concept that virtue can be implanted by mortal influence. This reliance on human, and therefore corrupt, pride would seem totally irreconcilable with the beliefs of the Jansenists. Although she has taken care to depict the corruption of man, and the false motivation that leads him, she has done so only in a general way, without then linking this idea to any form of religious belief.

Mme de Chartres also asserts that it is her daughter's reputation which is at risk. She may be "sur le bord du précipice" but all her efforts must be aimed at saving her reputation rather than her soul. The narrator also explains that the Princesse is "malheureuse d'être abandonnée à elle-même, dans un temps où elle était si peu maîtresse de ses sentiments" (p.39). This suggests that she is upset because she needs her mother during this difficult time. She does not seem particularly upset that her mother is dead, just that she is not there to help. Her distress comes from purely selfish reasons, an idea which has much in common with La Rochefoucauld's depiction of

man's motivation in the *Maximes*. Madame de Lafayette does not take this opportunity to reflect on the nature of eternal life, which suggests that this theme was not important to her, at least at this juncture in the novel.

However, she does use these events to highlight society's corrupt nature by introducing the subplot surrounding Mme de Tournon, which helps to give further insight into the Princesse de Clèves's character. Whilst these revelations highlight her relative ignorance of the worldliness of the court – which, according to Wells, is an environment for which her mother did not adequately prepare her[18] – it also depicts certain other failings in her character. She seems to relish the telling of the story: she enjoys it for its own sake and the fact that it diverts her from her grief at her mother's death. Mme de Chartres would not have approved of the telling of such a tale. She seems to have been reluctant for her daughter to hear such stories, presumably because she wished to keep her free from such ideas of corruption.

Even so soon after her death, though, Mme de Clèves appears to have forgotten her mother's advice on avoiding such courtly stories. This suggests that her mother was quite right to fear for her seeming lack of moral fortitude. It is also interesting to note that after her own husband's death, Mme de Tournon had lived "dans une retraite austère" (p.41). Thus the narrator shows that it is not only those who wish to conserve their virtue who retire from courtly life. This suggests that the fact that the Princesse de Clèves eventually retires from society does not automatically render her virtuous and morally upstanding.

Despite the fact that the Princesse is to be praised for telling her husband the truth about her passion for another man, it should be remembered that for a long time she attempts to hide this passion from him. She asks the Prince if she can retire from the court for a time because she does not feel that she is able to do some of the things that she was able to do when her mother was still alive (p.55). She initially attempts to have him agree to this withdrawal by lying to him and blaming the death of her mother for her sadness. At this point in the novel she is most certainly lacking in virtue, and only acts with her own interests at heart.

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[18] Byron R. Wells, 'The King, The Court, The Country: Theme and Structure in *La Princesse de Clèves*', *Papers on Seventeenth-Century French Literature*, 23 (1985), pp.543-558 (p.543)

Her false motivation is emphasised when she discovers the letter written by the Vidame to his lover, which she presumes to be from Nemours. She assumes that "Nemours ne l'aimait pas comme elle l'avait pensé et qu'il en aimait d'autres qu'il trompait comme elle" (p.68). If she really did want to avoid her passion then she would be glad that she had been mistaken in her belief of his regard for her. If he did not love her then she would be free from any temptation to enter into a relationship with him.

Yet the Princesse de Clèves does not react in this manner. She is heartbroken because she thinks that Nemours does not love her, and she is overwhelmingly jealous because of the numerous lovers she believes that he has. The narrator explains that "jamais affliction n'a été si piquante et si vive" (p.68), a fact that does not render the Princesse in a very good light, since her affliction now is evidently greater than when her mother died. When she does eventually try to convince herself that she will now have nothing to fear from herself with regards to Nemours and that "elle serait entièrement guérie de l'inclination qu'elle avait pour ce prince" (p.69), the reader can easily see that she does so because she wishes to believe it rather than because it is true. The fact that she is deceiving herself allies her characterisation with beliefs prevalent in the work of La Rochefoucauld.

The true extent of the Princesse's self deception only comes to light at the beginning of the third section of the work, when Nemours explains the real circumstances surrounding the composition of the lost letter. If she had truly resolved against loving him, and had really been glad that she was no longer in danger from any sort of temptation, then she would still have utilised this opportunity to distance herself from Nemours. However, she shows her own corruption by using the situation as an excuse to become even closer him. The narrator explains that "sous le prétexte des affaires de son oncle, [elle] entrait avec plaisir à garder tous les secrets que M. Nemours lui confiait" (p.82). Even though the Princesse has been given the opportunity to avoid becoming so intimate with her lover, instead of saving herself, she takes every chance to become more intimate with him.

She is rendered all the more culpable through her lies to the Reine Dauphine, who confronts her friend about the whereabouts of the missing letter. The Dauphine demonstrates her displeasure by declaring that the letter should not have been disposed

of thus "sans [sa] permission". Still her friend will not accept responsibility for the act, as she blames it on her husband. The narrator subtly highlights that the fault lies with the Princesse by having the Dauphine retort that it is indeed her fault, since she is the only woman "au monde qui fasse confidence à son mari de toutes les choses qu'elle sait" (p.83). Like the Princesse de Clèves, the reader knows that this statement is far from true. She has known of her growing passion for Nemours for some time, yet she has taken great pains that nobody, particularly her husband, should know of this love.

In this way, even the eponymous heroine of the work fails to live up to her outward appearance; she is not as pure or as sinless as the other courtiers may presume. Even though the Dauphine is giving her more credit than she deserves, the narrator makes no comment that this renders her particularly unhappy. It seems to the reader that her knowledge that she is committing a falsehood does not make her feel particularly guilty.

Perhaps the reason for this behaviour is her lack of self-knowledge. This is certainly emphasised when she attempts to recreate the letter with Nemours. She consents to lock herself away with him, but is reassured that what she is doing is the right thing by "la présence de son mari et les intérêts du Vidame de Chartres" (p.84). This is one of the worst lies that she tells herself, since she pretends that what she is doing is for the benefit of another, when in reality it is done for her own ends. This concept does indeed bring to mind similar ideas expressed in La Rochefoucauld.

It should be noted, however, that the Princesse de Clèves does later realise what this complicity signifies: "elle trouvait qu'elle était d'intelligence avec M. de Nemours, qu'elle trompait le mari du monde qui méritait le moins d'être trompé" (p.86). However what seems to bother her the most is not the pain that she is causing her husband, whether she is doing so deliberately or not, but rather the memory of her jealousy when she thought the letter had come from Nemours. She chastises herself for thinking that his love could ever have been true, since it is unlikely that "un homme comme M. de Nemours, qui avait toujours fait paraître tant de légèreté parmi les femmes, fut capable d'un attachement sincère et durable". She finally realises that all her "résolutions sont inutiles", and that the only way whereby she can be free of "[les] cruels repentirs et [les] mortelles douleurs que donne l'amour" is to escape Nemours's presence by leaving the court (p.86). She no longer cares for appearances in the same way, as she has finally

realised the danger in which she finds herself. She does not care what others will think of her voyage; she only cares for the good that it will do her. This is a more austere view than she has had in the past because she finally sees that what others think is secondary to her own moral well-being.

The Prince de Clèves, however, explains to her that "le repos...n'est guère propre pour une personne de [son] âge". When she realises that he means her to return to courtly society, she understands that she must finally tell him her reasons for wanting to stay in the countryside permanently. This scene is interesting, not least because of the motivation that leads the Princesse de Clèves to her remarkable confession. It appears that if he had allowed her to withdraw from society without any reservations, then she would not have told him the truth.

The confession itself still portrays a certain amount of concealment and manipulation on the part of the Princesse de Clèves. She begins her speech by stating that

> Je vais vous faire un aveu que l'on n'a jamais fait à son mari; mais l'innocence de ma conduite et de mes intentions m'en donne la force...Quelque dangereux que soit le parti que je prends, je le prends avec joie pour me conserver digne d'être à vous (p.89).

Immediately the reader can see that the Princesse is not telling the complete truth. Her actions may be pure, in that she has never committed any physical sin, nor has she ever had any intention of doing so, but her emotional and mental processes have been somewhat reprehensible. Her motivations for telling him of her love are not wholly pure. In fact, the whole episode is motivated by fear and a selfish desire to retain the reputation which has been cultivated for the Princesse.

Yet rather than admitting her weaknesses, she prefers to attempt to demonstrate to her husband that what she is doing is strong, and done for him. She counsels him that in order to do what she is doing now "il faut avoir plus d'amitié et plus d'estime pour un mari que l'on a jamais eu". She begs him, "conduisez-moi, ayez pitié de moi, et aimez-moi encore, si vous pouvez" (p.89). These pleas confirm her weak status in the eyes of the reader, no matter what her husband thinks.

The Prince de Clèves is himself lacking in self-knowledge, since his first reaction to the confession is that his wife is "plus digne d'estime et d'admiration que tout ce qu'il y a jamais eu de femmes au monde". In addition he has been made "malheureux par la plus grande marque de fidélité que jamais une femme ait donnée à son mari" (p.90). It is probable that his initial reaction of kindness is genuine: it is only later that he realises that such an opinion is untenable in the face of his mounting jealousy. The Princesse chooses to reiterate the fact that her avowal was not made "par faiblesse" and that "il faut plus de courage pour avouer cette vérité que pour entreprendre de la cacher" (p.90).

In this confession scene, Mme de Lafayette is careful to highlight the lack of self-knowledge in both the Princesse de Clèves and her husband. Neither of them portrays their true feelings, although they believe that they are acting honourably. In truth they are lying to themselves as well as to each other. Whilst the author demonstrates the lack of pure motivation for both these characters, she does not emphasise the religious aspect. She does not show that God's grace is necessary to combat this. It can only be presumed that whilst Mme de Lafayette wanted to portray man's corruption, she did not want to do so in a religious sense.

If she had intended to portray Jansenist views in this work, she could have used the Princesse's confession as a turning point, around which a change in her motivations could be centred. Up until this point the Princesse can be seen as a woman who is not entirely devoid of virtue, although her motivations are far from pure. She could be viewed as a sinner who cannot attain true virtue because she is without God's grace. However it must be presumed that this was not Mme de Lafayette's intention because she makes no obviously religious comments, even at this point. Instead the confession has been used as a plot device. Without it, her husband would have had to perceive his wife's passion for himself, which would have diminished the tragedy of ensuing events. Mme de Lafayette is thus more concerned with the way she constructs her story than with giving any didactic message.

From the very point of the confession it is obvious that Mme de Clèves remains motivated by her own selfish desires. Immediately after her husband has left her, she begins to wonder if what she has done is right. Eventually she concludes that it is, not because it was the only virtuous thing to do, but rather because she feels that it was the

only thing "qui la pouvait défendre contre M. de Nemours". She believes that she "n'avait point trop hasardé" (p.92). She would certainly not be thinking this if she truly believed that what she had done was morally right.

The lack of change in her character is highlighted through her continued dealings with Nemours. When she realises that it is Nemours who must have revealed her secret, she berates herself for ever having any faith in him. She declares,

> J'ai eu tort de croire qu'il y eût un homme capable de cacher ce qui flatte sa gloire. C'est pourtant pour cet homme que je me trouve comme les autres femmes, étant si éloignée de leur ressembler (p.105).

She appears upset not necessarily because she has come to be like all other women, but rather because she has changed thanks to a worthless man like Nemours. Despite the confession, she remains lacking in self-knowledge and still seems unable to resist the charm and power of a man who is not her husband. She still is not completely virtuous.

The death of the king leads to a change in the nature of the court and also necessitates various social occasions which most courtiers would relish. This is an interesting move by the author, since the increase in the number of courtly shows coincides with Mme de Clèves's increased desire to withdraw from society. She begs her husband not to make her travel to Reims for the coronation and he agrees. Despite the fact that the whole court will probably wonder where she is, thus partially compromising her reputation, her husband is worried for her virtue. The narrator explains that "quelque bonne opinion qu'il eût de la vertu de sa femme, il voyait bien que la prudence ne voulait pas qu'il l'exposât plus longtemps à la vue d'un homme qu'elle aimait" (p.113). Her husband does not trust her implicitly, which could be because he sees that his wife is weak and easily corrupted.

One example of this is his belief that she has been complicit with Nemours somehow; he thinks that the duc must have openly declared his love at some point. He accuses her bitterly, declaring

> Vous n'avez pu me dire la vérité tout entière, vous m'en avez caché la plus grande partie; vous vous êtes repentie même du peu que vous m'avez avoué et vous n'avez pas eu la force de continuer (p.115).

He berates her for having robbed him of his "calme" and "raison". These are the very things which she hoped to retain for herself through the making of her confession. This highlights her selfish nature: she was willing to sacrifice her husband's peace of mind in order to retain her own.

Despite the fact that the Prince's despair is growing, she remains attached to Nemours and is deeply upset when he is away and there is no chance of their meeting. The narrator tells the reader that "elle trouva une grande peine à penser qu'il n'était plus au pouvoir du hasard de faire qu'elle le rencontrât" (p.117). She has been trying to escape his company, but when she finally does this, she is unhappy. Even though she has sacrificed her relationship with her husband, she has not become any more virtuous. This suggests that that even the truth does not always save you, an idea that is completely against the teaching of the Jansenists.

When the Prince de Clèves's continued suffering makes him ill, his wife attends to her husband day and night, a sign of both her affection for him as her husband and of the guilt she feels. The narrator informs us that "elle ne sortait point de la chambre de son mari et avait une douleur violente de l'état où elle le voyait" (p.125), but even now her motivation must be questioned. It is never made clear which of these feelings is the most powerful.

The Prince de Clèves does not attempt to reduce his wife's guilt. He declares, "vous versez bien des pleurs...pour une mort que vous causez et qui ne peut donner la douleur que vous faites paraître...je meurs du cruel déplaisir que vous m'avez donné" (p.126). In fact he aims to increase her remorse by adding, "adieu, madame, vous regretterez quelque jour un homme qui vous aimait d'une passion véritable et légitime" (p.127). This description of his own love is evidently meant to contrast with that of Nemours, whose feelings, for other women at least, have always been shallow and worthless. The Princesse has sacrificed her husband for a man who is without true worth in any moral

or honourable sense. This, of course, renders her actions all the more reprehensible and there is no doubt that her husband sees her as completely culpable for his demise.

In some ways she *is* to blame for his situation: if she had been strong enough not to feel any temptation with regards to Nemours, then she need never have told her husband of her illicit passion. Of course her confession was not morally wrong, but her motivation for making it was. If she had been motivated by duty, love for her husband, or indeed the knowledge that in order to be virtuous one must always be honest, then the Prince de Clèves would be entirely false in his accusations. However as matters stand, the reader cannot help but feel that he is at least partially justified.

Despite this, the Princesse is at pains to argue that her conduct has been pure. She declares, "la vertu la plus austère ne peut inspirer d'autre conduite que celle que j'ai eue; et je n'ai jamais fait d'action dont je n'eusse souhaité que vous eussiez témoin" (p.127). In fact the reader knows that this statement is not totally true: she did not wish him to know exactly what happened with the portrait stolen by Nemours, nor does she ever recount in full any conversation she has had with him. There are several things of which she has been a part that she would be most unwilling for her husband to know. Whilst she has not committed any physical act which could be considered as an outright betrayal, her emotional and mental actions are an entirely different matter.

It is when M. de Clèves dies that she realises what role she has played in his suffering and subsequent death. She then finds herself "dans une affliction si violente" that she almost loses "l'usage de la raison" (p.128). She finally realises "quel mari elle avait perdu" and begins to consider "qu'elle était la cause de sa mort". This leads her to view both herself and Nemours with "horreur". She taunts herself with what she really should have done: "elle repassait incessamment tout ce qu'elle lui devait, et elle se faisait un crime de n'avoir pas eu de la passion pour lui, comme si c'eût été une chose qui eût été en son pouvoir" (p.129). It is only after several months that she comes out of "cette violente affliction où elle était" and passes instead into "un état de tristesse et de langueur" (p.130).

There is a certain amount of change in the Princesse de Clèves after the death of her husband, but this stops short of a full conversion along Jansenist lines. She regrets her

past actions, but is motivated by guilt rather than true repentance. Whilst she is mortified at his death, the narrator suggests that she is more upset because she sees herself as the cause of his demise, rather than because he is actually dead. Her guilt, and perhaps even her self-pity, is stronger than her grief at the fact that her husband is dead. Her motivations remain far from pure, even at this point in the novel.

The fact that the Princesse de Clèves remains unchanged in essence becomes all the more evident when she returns to court. When she sees Nemours again, the narrator explains, "quelle passion endormie se ralluma sans son cœur, et avec quelle violence!" (p.131). At first it appears that she has become stronger; she finally believes that she has the power to renounce him. This is most probably because "elle ne trouvait guère moins de crime à épouser M. de Nemours qu'elle en avait trouvé à l'aimer pendant la vie de son mari" (p.132). It is interesting that this change seems to take place once she is not constrained by any outside force. First her mother, and then the Prince de Clèves, guided her through life. Whilst she had this support she did not believe that she was strong enough to resist temptation. However once these forces have been removed she becomes empowered by her new status: it initially seems that she now has the necessary willpower to combat her attraction.

She decides to run away from society, to shut herself away. Nemours declares this idea to be "une pensée vaine et sans fondement" because he can see no valid reason why they should not now be together (p.136). In fact this is merely further proof of her continued weakness. She does not trust herself to be close to Nemours, so she plans to move as far away from him as possible. She withdraws from society not because she has found any sort of religion, but because she is afraid of her love for another man. As Kelly explains, "although she leads a life of piety and devotion, she never quite leaves the frontier with the world".[19]

The Princesse's continued unhappiness is underlined throughout this last meeting with Nemours. She asks why she could not have met him before she became "engagée", or even once she was free again. She demands to know, "pourquoi la destinée nous sépare-t-elle par un obstacle si invincible" (p.140). It becomes obvious that her desire is to be

[19] Van Kelly, 'Reducing Polyphony: The Princesse de Clèves Among Voices', *Papers on Seventeenth-Century French Studies*, 40 (1994), pp.157-175 (p.157)

with Nemours, and suggests that she believes she has been treated badly by fate. In this assertion she does not seem to consider that her continued regard for him comes from any fault or weakness on her own part; she does not appear to want to take responsibility for the fatal consequences of her attraction to him. In this respect she has something in common with Racine's Phèdre: they both fail to acknowledge their weakness openly. This can be explained by their relative lack of self-knowledge; they do not understand their own motivations or desires. However Mme de Lafayette does not make any didactic points out of this view. Her intention was obviously only to depict human corruption in a general way without portraying any specific religious viewpoint.

The Princesse's selfish reasons for renouncing Nemours are emphasised by the narrator, who comments that "les raisons qu'elle avait de ne point épouser M. de Nemours lui paraissaient fortes du côté de son devoir et insurmontables du côté de son repos" (p.142). She is renouncing him because she fears that he will eventually make her unhappy rather than because she knows that it is her duty to do so. If she were motivated by a new-found piety, then this retreat would surely have rendered her much calmer, and probably happier. However this is not the case, since her continued agitation leads her to become ill. This does change her attitude slightly, but only in that she is now convinced of "la nécessité de mourir". She enters a convent, but even this cannot be viewed as a particularly religious move as whilst she recognises that there is no real possibility of happiness in this life, she does not seem to discern the fact that she will be at peace in the life to come. However the lack of constancy in man *is* highlighted, when we are told that Nemours's affections gradually change: "le temps et l'absence ralentirent sa douleur et éteignirent sa passion" (p.144). Instead of giving a religious slant to events, Mme de Lafayette chooses to depict the inconstancy of man in a general way.

This idea that the author was not specifically concerned to depict religious notions in her work is emphasised by the fact that the Princesse de Clèves only spends "une partie de l'année" in the convent. She may spend all of her time "dans une retraite et dans des occupations plus saintes que celles des couvents les plus austères", but if she were living such a life because she had found religion, the narrator would surely have emphasised the point. In this case, she would have spent all of her time in the convent,

probably taking vows so that her life would be devoted only to God. However since none of these things happen, it seems unlikely that Mme de Lafayette desired such an interpretation. The Princesse may have left "des exemples de vertu inimitables" (p.144), but this is an example of secular virtue.

Thus a close reading of the actual events does not suggest that a specifically Jansenist interpretation of the work is wholly possible. However the work is certainly pessimistic in tone. As Scott has noted, the work "begins (virtually) with marriage, ends with refusal and isolation, and can even be interpreted as implying that the 'right' man does not exist".[20] Although there appears to be nothing in the early part of the novel that would preclude a happy ending, the reader, according to Scott, finds himself dismissing such a possibility, mainly because of the tone.[21] All relationships appear to end unhappily. Relationships are portrayed as false: even though the Prince de Clèves loves his wife, he thinks nothing of sending a spy to check up on her. There is no example in the work of a couple that love each other wholly and truthfully without some form of deception or concealment. It is worth noting that, according to Duchêne, the suggestion made by some critics that the portrayal of love found in the work appears as a result of the author's own unhappy experiences has been refuted with some vigour.[22]

Helen Karen Kaps has highlighted the fact that the work is filled with verbs such as "cacher" and "dissimuler", thereby underlining the "sense of constraint and falsity".[23] It has also been suggested that the basis of the whole work is the premise that "the will is crippled in the presence of true passion"; the only way in which such an inclination can be overcome is through self-knowledge.[24] At first this seems to be a very Augustinian concept. It is through self-knowledge, which is only possible with the aid of God's grace, that man is able to understand, and start to overcome, his sinful nature. However Mme de Lafayette makes no attempt to highlight the religious nature of this concept and she certainly does not suggest that events would have been any different if some higher force had intervened. If she had intended such an interpretation, she would surely have made it more obvious.

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[20] J.W. Scott, *Mme de Lafayette:* La Princesse de Clèves, p.11
[21] Ibid, p.21
[22] Roger Duchêne, *Mme de Lafayette: La romancière aux cent bras*, pp.13-14
[23] Helen Karen Kaps, *Moral Perspective in* La Princesse de Clèves, Eugene, Oregon, 1968, pp.6-7
[24] Ibid, p.23

It is also true that there appear to be no perfect characters within the novel. As we have seen, even the Princesse has faults. As Kaps has pointed out, she feigns illness to extricate herself from difficult situations and even enjoys the complicity in the affair of the Vidame's letter. The court is "not simply a corrupt milieu in which the Princess happens to find herself. It is her world – she is part of it, and it is part of her".[25] Mme de Clèves is not "exempt from the weaknesses and human failings of the other characters". She may be set apart from the other courtiers, but this is "not because she is inherently 'better' than they are – but because she is tormented by the fact that she is not".[26] Surely if Mme de Lafayette had been aiming at a portrayal of Jansenist views within the work then she would have made it obvious that the Princesse was able to withdraw from the influence of a corrupt society because she was given the strength to do so by the aid of God's grace. However this is not the case: the novel only portrays general views of the corruption of man, without propounding any explanation or solution.

Some critics have argued that the supposed Jansenist slant to the work is evident through the portrayal of fate. Scott has pointed out that the reader is introduced to the concept of individual destiny through the king's views on astrology,[27] whilst at certain points within the work it is possible to detect "a deterministic conception of the world".[28] It is the astrologer's prediction of the king's unlikely demise which gives the reader the idea of "the inevitability of fate".[29] Kaps believes that this fatalistic force should not be seen as anti-Christian, but rather can be viewed as "somewhat Jansenistic".[30] For her, the predetermination inherent in this particular religious view is evident in this aspect of the novel. However the concept of fate is a thoroughly pagan idea and to say that there is a hint of Jansenism merely because there is some sort of predestination is just too facile a conclusion. In fact, the concept of fate is contrary to the Jansenist position, since it could be said that there is some force other than God that is guiding the future of the individual.

Other critics have emphasised the religious nature of the work by stating that there are also various religious ceremonies within the work. This concept is highlighted by

[25] Helen Karen Kaps, *Moral Perspective in* La Princesse de Clèves, p.12
[26] Ibid, p.16
[27] J.W. Scott, *Mme de Lafayette:* La Princesse de Clèves, p.19
[28] Ibid, p.79
[29] Helen Karen Kaps, *Moral Perspective in* La Princesse de Clèves, p.24
[30] Ibid

Paulson, who acknowledges that the "*sacre du roi* is a quasi-religious ritual through which the boy Francis becomes in essence consecrated in the eyes of God".[31] Whilst it should not be concluded that the novel is devoid of all religion – a novel written during the seventeenth century would be unlikely to remain unaffected by themes relating to Christianity in some way – the fact that there are some references to religion does not by any means add to the argument that the work is overtly Jansenist.

It has even been suggested that the Princesse de Clèves is actually a religious figure. Dédéyan states that "elle est chrétienne, sans grandes manifestations de piété, par son sens du remords, du sacrifice, du renoncement." He even believes that "elle refait à sa manière la grandeur et la misère de l'homme de Pascal".[32] In addition, Kaps has asserted that "the novel's conclusion is indeed a triumph of virtue".[33] For her, critics who have spoken of a lack of true Christian ethic within the work are completely mistaken. She proffers the idea that the death of Mme de Chartres is "completely Christian",[34] a concept also emphasised by Leiner, who sees her as "a sincere Christian".[35] This latter critic believes that God is only absent "for the reader who neglects or refuses to take into consideration Christian morality".[36] Mme de Chartres is described in approving terms as a woman "dont le bien, la vertu et le mérite étaient extraordinaires", and is depicted as being overwhelmingly moral.[37] However it should also be remembered that she does not appear to make religious statements on her deathbed and there is no mention of her receiving the sacrament before she dies. Whilst she may be a Christian, Mme de Lafayette does not emphasise this characteristic, even when she is ill.

Instead, Mme de Chartres seems to act in the best interests of her family reputation when she arranges the marriage of her daughter, rather than considering the fact that she is pushing her into a marriage with a man she does not love. If she were indeed a pious

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[31] Michael G. Paulson, *Facets of a Princess: Multiple Readings of Madame de Lafayette's* La Princesse de Clèves, New York, 1998, p.48
[32] Charles Dédéyan, *Madame de Lafayette*, Deuxième édition, p.203
[33] Helen Karen Kaps, *Moral Perspective in* La Princesse de Clèves, p.23
[34] Ibid, p.25
[35] Wolfgang Leiner, 'The Princess and Her Spiritual Guide: On The Influence of Preaching in Fiction', in Patrick Henry (ed), *An Inimitable Example: The Case for the Princesse de Clèves*, Washington, 1992, pp.139-155 (p.141)
[36] Ibid, p.153
[37] J.W. Scott, *Mme de Lafayette:* La Princesse de Clèves, p.39

woman, she would have spent less time worrying about maintaining the family name. Indeed, even when she councils her against her affections for Nemours, she appears to do so because she is worried about the loss of reputation which would ensue, rather than the fact that adultery, real or indeed imagined, is a sin in the eyes of God. Her main concern is not pious duty but rather secular concern for honour and pride. Campbell states that the opinions of Mme de Chartres are not "unique...or even especially 'Jansenist'". Instead, he asserts, they are part of a "long tradition of thought", expressed by Stoic philosophers and Christian moralists, which "insists on the dangers of giving way to the passions, on the acceptance of suffering and on the refusal to become attached to the things of this transient world".[38] Madame de Lafayette employs these themes in a general way, rather than to put forward a particular moral viewpoint.

Malandain puts forward the idea that it is the Jansenist concept of a "refus intramondain du monde" that Mme de Lafayette "met ainsi en œuvre".[39] The lack of any true references to religion are, according to Kaps, only evidence that the author wished to comply with "a code of propriety which excluded from fiction matters unsuitable by their extreme dignity as well as those unsuitable by their lack of it".[40] However, this assertion is not without its own problems. The most obvious argument against this is the fact that fiction was in no way reconcilable with those virtues found within Jansenist belief. Furthermore an author who really wished to display some form of religious belief in his work would not care whether this was suitable or not. True Jansenist authors were not put off when they criticised such literary forms, so it seems unlikely that Mme de Lafayette would have done so had she been intent on depicting a Jansenist world-view within *La Princesse de Clèves*.

Various critics have asserted the influence of other religious forces on the novel. Leiner, for example, believes that there are similarities to be found between this work and that of Bossuet,[41] whilst Patrick Henry has emphasised a link between the novel and the

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[38] John Campbell, *Questions of Interpretation in* La Princesse de Clèves, Amsterdam, 1996, p.26
[39] Pierre Malandain, *Madame de Lafayette:* La Princesse de Clèves, p.30
[40] Helen Karen Kaps, *Moral Perspective in* La Princesse de Clèves, p.25
[41] For more on this see Wolfgang Leiner, 'The Princess and Her Spiritual Guide: On The Influence of Preaching in Fiction', in Patrick Henry (ed), *An Inimitable Example: The Case for the Princesse de Clèves*, pp.139-145

thought found in Saint François de Sales's *Introduction à la vie dévote*.[42] However much these studies may highlight the concept that a religious reading of some description is necessary, neither really demonstrates that *La Princesse de Clèves* was written with the purpose of educating the Christian. The fact that there may be some religious references within the work is not totally disputed. It is evident that Mme de Lafayette employed themes that were important in the Catholic Church as a whole during this period, but she only does so in a general way without overtly referring to any one religious viewpoint.

Some critics go so far as to assert that there seems to be little real evocation of religion within the work. Paulson has stated that "very few critical works...have shown any correlation between Madame de Lafayette's novel and the prevalent religious mood of late seventeenth-century France".[43] Despite the fact that the name of God is pronounced "at least one hundred times", he believes that there is only "the appearance of religion rather than its true spirit".[44] Scott highlights the fact that one of the most important events during the period in which the novel is set – the rise of Protestantism – is barely mentioned and is "reduced to not much more than a passing reference".[45] Paulson also highlights this lack, and states that the place where the reader would have expected such a reference – in the section which deals with Nemours' proposed betrothal to Elizabeth I – is completely devoid of any such allusion.[46]

In addition, there is a distinct lack of any mention of heresy, whilst there is no depiction of any of the reformed churches, a fact which, for Paulson, implies that "religion is not an area of prime interest to the novel or its author".[47] It is difficult to assert that Mme de Lafayette would not have been influenced in some way by the Christian ethos which pervaded her world. However, she certainly does not depict any vivid form of religious doctrine in this work.

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[42] See Patrick Henry, '*La Princesse de Clèves* and *L'Introduction à la vie dévote*', in Patrick Henry (ed), *An Inimitable Example: The Case for the Princesse de Clèves*, pp.156-180
[43] Michael G. Paulson, *Facets of a Princess*, p.46
[44] Ibid, p.49
[45] J.W. Scott, *Mme de Lafayette:* La Princesse de Clèves, p.15
[46] Michael G. Paulson, *Facets of a Princess*, p.51
[47] Ibid, p.52

Other critics have underlined the lack of any form of confessional or "priestly council" within *La Princesse de Clèves*, a fact which, according to Scott, "could well be of significance".[48] Leiner has stated that Mme de Lafayette avoids "all mention of religious practice", particularly where it would be expected, such as before a death.[49] He also believes that there are very few true references to God; secular expressions such as "passion" and "beauty" appear much more frequently. This, he explains, is because the author is dealing with an environment "occupied to a greater extent with worldly realities than with the problems of moral and Christian conduct".[50] Paulson has commented that this universe "does not have room for God, just mortal gods such as Henri II and Nemours...who have supplanted God as objects of worship and veneration".[51] These ideas emphasise the argument that Mme de Lafayette wanted to portray religion only in a general way, without depicting any particular belief.

In a recent article, Campbell has noted that some critics have pointed out other philosophical influences on the work. Two of the most important ones are Stoicism and Pyrrhonism, propounded by critics such as Pokorný and Gregorio.[52] Campbell suggests that there are numerous possible readings of *La Princesse de Clèves*, thus Jansenism "falls short of providing 'the entire ideological basis'" of the work.[53] Thus, the Princesse's rejection of Nemours could be seen as inspired by Platonist principles, since sexual passion is avoided as part of the search for a higher state of being.[54] In addition, Mme de Chartres's teachings could be seen as Neo-Stoic, in that mistrust of appearances is as important to this belief system as it is to Jansenism.[55] Campbell is entirely correct in his assertion that there is no easy answer to the search for the so-called meaning of the text.

Whilst certain critics see the novel's ending as proof that the Princesse has opted for God rather than worldly society, this has shown to be debatable. Campbell has explained that some see this withdrawal as a sign of "self-affirmation"; this is the only

[48] J.W. Scott, *Mme de Lafayette:* La Princesse de Clèves, p.78
[49] Wolfgang Leiner, 'The Princess and Her Spiritual Guide: On The Influence of Preaching in Fiction', p.139
[50] Ibid, p.140
[51] Michael G. Paulson, *Facets of a Princess*, p.53
[52] John Campbell, 'The Usual Suspects', p.437
[53] Ibid, p.438
[54] Ibid, p.440
[55] Ibid, p.442

way in which she can gain any sort of happiness, so this is the course of action which she chooses. Thus this withdrawal could be seen as egotistical, as it is done in her own interests.[56] In addition, this withdrawal does not, according to Kaps, "necessarily imply a condemnation of the world which Mme de Clèves has abandoned. The narrator is too persuasive in his expansive tolerance and good will to permit this view".[57]

Scott believes that "the attitude of the author towards sexual passion is not moralistic".[58] There is no indication at the end of the work as to whether the actions of the Princesse were explicitly right or wrong.[59] The courtiers are "never censured by the narrator"; instead "he seems anxious to attenuate what might draw a harsh judgement from the reader".[60] If Mme de Lafayette had been concerned to depict her heroine as escaping from a corrupt world in order to lead a virtuous, and religious, life then she would have openly condemned the society which she portrays. The Princesse does not leave the court because she believes that such a life would threaten her spiritual well-being, but rather because she is afraid that she will not be able to resist Nemours. It is he whom she is escaping, and not the court as a whole.

There are many obvious similarities between *La Princesse de Clèves* and the *Maximes* of La Rochefoucauld. Campbell asserts that "the favouritism, the need for approval and the desire for power" are reminiscent of *maxime* 85: "Nous nous persuadons souvent d'aimer les gens plus puissants que nous; et néanmoins c'est l'intérêt seul qui produit notre amitié".[61] It is unsurprising that there are similarities, particularly as the duc no doubt helped his friend in the composition of her novel. However, just because the pair had a pessimistic view of mankind, this does not render them particularly Jansenist. Pessimism and Jansenism are clearly not the same thing. In fact, despite Mme de Lafayette's acquaintance with various Jansenist figures, she did not accept their beliefs wholeheartedly. Dédéyan has explained that her criticism of Nicole meant that her works "n'ont rien de Port-Royal".[62] Even in later life, she was not completely

[56] John Campbell, *Questions of Interpretation in* La Princesse de Clèves, p.199
[57] Helen Karen Kaps, *Moral Perspective in* La Princesse de Clèves, p.87
[58] J.W. Scott, *Mme de Lafayette:* La Princesse de Clèves, p.60
[59] Ibid, p.83
[60] Helen Karen Kaps, *Moral Perspective in* La Princesse de Clèves, pp.48-49
[61] John Campbell, *Questions of Interpretation in* La Princesse de Clèves, p.84
[62] Charles Dédéyan, *Madame de Lafayette*, Deuxième édition, pp.33-34

comfortable with their extreme form of piety and was drawn to a more worldly existence.

Whilst most critics who aim to demonstrate the link between Mme de Lafayette's work and the Jansenist form of piety concentrate on *La Princesse de Clèves*, it should be remembered that this was far from being her only work. It was not even her most successful work in her own lifetime. Some critics focus on the last of Mme de Lafayette's works to be published, *La Comtesse de Tende*. According to Green, this short work was probably written between 1658 and 1660, but was not published until 1724, a number of years after the death of its author.[63] When it appeared, critics were most interested in the moral lessons to be found within the work, which were seen as "more clearly defined than in *La Princesse de Clèves*".[64] It has been argued that this work contains "a Jansenist coloring of sentiment",[65] whilst Haig believes that there is also a "fatefulness" in the work which could be termed "Jansenistic".[66] It is certainly true that there is a more pronounced theological tone to the work, although this is still far from being the predominant theme. Duchêne has stated that he believes that "la religion n'entre en scène qu'aux dernières pages",[67] a view that suggests the lack of religion in the rest of the novel.

There are many themes in *La Comtesse de Tende* which are similar to those found in *La Princesse de Clèves*. Madame de Lafayette again lays a great deal of emphasis on the grandeur of the characters: her narrator explains that the Comte de Tende is "riche, bien fait, le seigneur de la cour qui vivait avec le plus d'éclat et plus propre à se faire estimer qu'à plaire".[68] However he does not love his wife; instead he views her "comme une enfante". The narrator shows that it is not love that forms marriages. Instead the characters are dominated by ambition, and marry in order to improve their social standing, just as in *La Princesse de Clèves*. This fact is rendered most evident through the case of the Chevalier de Navarre. He has nothing but "la naissance" to recommend him, so he seeks a relationship with the widowed Princesse de Neufchâtel, since it is through such an alliance that he will be able to make his fortune (p.399).

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[63] Anne Green, *Privileged Anonymity: The Writings of Madame de Lafayette*, Oxford, 1996, p.31
[64] Ibid
[65] Stirling Haig, *Madame de Lafayette*, p.50
[66] Ibid, p.135
[67] Roger Duchêne, *Mme de Lafayette: La romancière aux cent bras*, p.459
[68] Madame de Lafayette, *Romans et nouvelles*, E. Magne (ed), Paris, 1970, p.399

Despite his ambition to marry the Princesse de Neufchâtel, Navarre falls in love with the Comtesse de Tende. Her *amour-propre* is "flatté" by his passion and their love becomes mutual. However, like the Princesse de Clèves, she is unable to accept that she loves a man other than her husband, even though her husband does not love her, and has been conducting an affair of his own. The narrator explains that the Comtesse is "dans une agitation qui lui ôta le repos"; she is horrified to have taken the heart of the man whom her own friend intends to marry (p.400). The "honte et les malheurs" of an affair appear before her eyes and she sees "l'abîme où elle se précipitait et elle résolut de l'éviter" (pp.400-401). However, as was the case in *La Princesse de Clèves*, such resolutions mean little; the narrator states that "elle tint mal ses résolutions". Whilst she at least convinces Navarre that he must continue his advances to the Princesse de Neufchâtel in order to make his fortune, she continues to love him and "était prête à expirer de douleur". She does not attend the public ceremony in honour of the marriage and "s'enferma dans son cabinet" (p.401).

Her misery is rendered all the more terrible when Navarre visits her when he should be on the way to his wedding. The Comtesse demonstrates her lack of morality: her first reaction is to think of the affect on her reputation rather than the fact that she is betraying both her husband and her friend. Navarre declares his intention to renounce his marriage to please her, but she demands that he should return to his ceremony and "la grandeur" which is owed him (p.402). Once again she is more concerned with the loss of fortune that will ensue, rather than the immorality of what he is proposing. The fact that she wishes Navarre to marry a woman he does not love just so that he will be financially better off is not a move inspired by honour or duty. Pride and greed motivate both of these characters.

The Princesse de Neufchâtel is herself not entirely free of false pride. When the wedding ceremony has been completed, she shows her misery to the Comtesse at the fact that her new husband "aime une autre". However what seems to worry her more is the fact that she has married beneath her: she has made "un mariage inégal...qui m'abaisse" (p.404). The Comtesse is mortified at these words, as she realises the extent of her betrayal. Like her counterpart in *La Princesse de Clèves*, she can find "point de repos" because she is so tortured by what she has done (p.404). However her husband is

not entirely free from blame either: he has been conducting his own affair, regardless of his wife's feelings. When Navarre explains that he is in a difficult situation with his mistress, the Comte asks his wife to help (p.406). These facts diminish the reader's sympathy for the Comte: if he is willing to help Navarre in his illicit affairs, then he can have little to complain about when it is he himself who is the cuckold.

Like the Princesse de Clèves, the Comtesse decides to leave Paris to escape the miserable situation in which she finds herself when her lover leaves for war. However it is at this point that she discovers that she is pregnant with his child. What is interesting is that her first concern is not for her husband, or for the friend that she has cheated, but rather for "la réputation qu'elle avait acquise et conservée" (p.407). Her first concern is always motivated by pride rather than by any true sense of regret or guilt. She does not appear to repent wholeheartedly of her terrible sin. This fact is emphasised when she learns that Navarre has been killed in battle. Now she loses all fear "pour son repos, pour sa réputation, [et] pour sa vie". The one moral thought which she has is that she cannot take her own life because of her "christianisme" (p.408). This is the first mention of any religion in the work; it is interesting that it is only in adversity that the Comtesse de Tende begins to think of her faith.

However this does not signal any sort of conversion in the protagonist: the Comtesse is as concerned with herself as she ever has been. She pretends that she is ill so that her husband will not question her emotional state or become suspicious. In addition, when he recounts to her the death of Navarre she "ne put résister à ce discours; ses larmes redoublèrent" (p.409). The fact that she cries for the loss of her lover in front of her husband does not say much for her moral worth. She regrets his loss more than she regrets her past behaviour.

In fact the reader is forced to question whether she would ever have told the Comte the truth if it were not for the fact that she found herself to be pregnant. She may offer her life "à Dieu...pour l'expiation de [son] crime" (p.409), but the fact that she wishes to die rather than face the consequences of her actions is particularly cowardly. She does not offer her life to God because she truly repents of her sins, but rather because she feels there is no other course of action open to her. She accepts death "avec une joie que

personne n'a jamais ressentie" (p.412), but this is because it will help her escape from her worldly miseries rather than because she hopes to find peace in God.

Thus at the end of the work there is some introduction of religious ideas but this is only superficial. None of the characters undergo any real conversion, and both the Comte and his wife are just glad that their mutual embarrassment is over. The Comtesse is happy that she can escape the pain of the loss of her lover, whilst her husband is happy that her betrayal will never come to light. Neither of them has found God in any real sense and in fact He does not have any real place in the work. It appears that the author has only added in this reference in order to adhere to the Christian climate of her society. If Madame de Lafayette had wished to write a work with a Jansenist theme, she would have used many more references to sin and its affects. The Jansenist God is not just hidden in this case, he is entirely absent.

Mme de Lafayette did not aim to demonstrate a particularly Augustinian form of piety in her novels. She was obviously influenced by La Rochefoucauld's pessimistic beliefs and was evidently interested in the Jansenist doctrines she came across at the salon of Mme de Sablé, but she only used these concepts in her work in a general way. The corruption of man, and his false motivation, may have been ideas that interested her, but she did not give them a religious slant. Thus, although her novels should of course be read with Jansenism in mind, this should only play a very minor role in any interpretation of her work.

CHAPTER FIVE: RACINE

Racine's links with the Jansenist movement are well documented, although opinions vary as to how strong this connection was. Sellier has argued that some critics have had a tendency to project "la question d'un éventuel 'Jansénisme'" on to Racine's work, which they have done "par la rumeur des controverses" rather than through practising "une écoute fine des vers raciniens".[1] Others believe that the affect of the dramatist's contact with Augustinian theology meant that he tried to avoid this viewpoint in his own work. Such critics emphasise

> cette démonstration négative, en manifestant que l'univers des tragédies est diamétralement opposé non seulement au jansénisme...mais à toute vision augustinienne du monde.[2]

Sellier asserts that after a short study of the fifty-three individuals that are "caractérisés moralement" by Racine, the critic may well become sceptical of any Jansenist influence. Indeed only "une demi-douzaine d'entre eux sont cités par les partisans d'un jansénisme racinien".[3] However this does not mean, according to Sellier, that a Jansenist reading of the plays is impossible. For some it is obvious that the dramatist's early connection to Port-Royal left an important mark on his tragedies. Such people believe that "la tragédie racinienne, en son inspiration centrale, ne s'est jamais éloignée totalement de Port-Royal".[4]

Indeed, it is Racine's education which has been seen as the greatest influence on his work. It has been argued that it provided the world-view portrayed in his tragedies.[5] Michel Bouvier has noted that these works are based on a premise taught at Port-Royal:

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[1] Philippe Sellier, *Augustinisme et la littérature II: Le Siècle de saint Augustin, La Rochefoucauld, Mme de LaFayette, Sacy, Racine*, Paris, 2000, p.217
[2] Ibid, p.222
[3] Ibid, p.223
[4] Ibid, p.231
[5] For more on Racine's interaction with the educational style at Port-Royal see the chapter on 'Racine and Memory' in Nicholas Hammond, *Fragmentary Voices: Memory and Education at Port-Royal*, Tübingen, 2004, pp.133-172

"chacun doit lutter contre l'amour de soi qui...tend au mépris de Dieu".[6] This self-love, which has dominated man since Adam's sin, draws him away from God. For Bouvier this is the love that is most evident in Racinian tragedy. Each character believes that he is following his own "bonheur", but in reality he is doing quite the opposite.[7] Thus it is the characters' lack of self-knowledge which betrays their Augustinian heritage: each individual "se trompe sur ce qu'il veut réellement".[8] Sellier insists that it was during his time at the *Petites Ecoles* that Racine absorbed "la théologie de ses maîtres...ses pièces en porteraient presque partout la marque".[9]

Goldmann has also emphasised the importance of the Jansenist influence on Racine. It is the theme of *Deus Absconditus* which he sees as the greatest proof of this, even though the movement despised the theatre so much.[10] He adds that

> si les dieux des tragédies raciniennes sont des idoles païennes, c'est qu'au XVIIe siècle, le chrétien Racine ne pouvait plus, ou ne pouvait pas encore, représenter le Dieu chrétien et janséniste sur les planches....Le Soleil de *Phèdre* est, en réalité, le même Dieu tragique que le Dieu caché de Pascal.[11]

This argument seems all too facile an explanation for Racine's fascination with the themes of predestination and free will, and it should be noted that not all critics agree. Rohou has commented that it is all too easy to attribute Racine's tragedies to his education. Instead it should be remembered that "il a composé ses tragédies à une époque ou il était brouillé avec eux et avait apparemment rejeté leur enseignement".[12] One undeniably important feature of this education was Racine's introduction to "[la] culture grecque et biblique".[13] He also composed some of his first poetry whilst at the *Petites Ecoles*. This introduction to Greek classical literature had a particularly

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[6] Michel Bouvier, 'Une dramaturgie de l'amour-propre: le théâtre de Racine', in Gilles Declerq et Michèle Rosellini (eds), *Jean Racine 1699-1999: Actes du colloque Île-de-France-La Ferté-Milon 25-30 mai 1999*, Paris, 2003, pp.189-210 (p.189)
[7] Ibid, p.193
[8] Ibid, p.200
[9] Philippe Sellier, *Augustinisme et la littérature II*, p.222
[10] Lucien Goldmann, *Le Dieu caché: Étude sur la vision tragique dans les Pensées de Pascal et dans le théâtre de Racine*, Paris, 1959, pp.351-352
[11] Ibid, p.352
[12] Jean Rohou, *Jean Racine: entre sa carrière, son œuvre et son Dieu*, Paris, c1992, p.95
[13] Philippe Sellier, *Augustinisme et la littérature* II, p.218

important affect on the dramatist. According to Knight, the seventeenth century "ne paraît pas l'époque la plus brillante de l'hellénisme". Although it did feature to some extent in the education available at the time, it was far from widespread.[14] Some authors, such as Quinault, did not know a word of Greek.[15] Without this particular education, Racine would not have gained "l'intelligence et le respect des textes".[16] Although Goldmann believes that he was less affected by "la lecture de tel ou tel ouvrage" than by "la réalité humaine exceptionnelle" of Port-Royal,[17] the benefits of his classical education should not be underestimated.

Despite their distaste of literature for its own sake, the Jansenists, like Augustine, did not object to great literary works when they aided the pupil in his search for God. In addition, both Sacy and Arnauld d'Andilly were poets in their own right. Thus it was the *solitaires* who "avaient favorisé son amour de la poésie, et ses premiers vers français chantent les solitudes qui entourent le monastère".[18] It seems ironic that the Jansenists themselves introduced Racine to the very art form which would lead to his separation from the group. The Jansenists also helped him once he left their care: he spent two years at the Collège de Beauvais, after which he returned to Port-Royal for a year. His tutors then aided him in gaining entrance to the collège d'Harcourt, an establishment linked with Port-Royal. According to Picard, the principal there was a friend of the *solitaires* and had even been responsible for the printing of numerous *Provinciales*.[19] Racine's connections to the movement obviously continued, even after he left their school.

Racine was able to enjoy the success of his first play, *La Thébaïde*, without breaking from his former masters. Sellier believes that although he wrote two plays "sans véritablement rompre avec Port-Royal",[20] this uneasy alliance could not last. Racine supposedly betrayed the *solitaires* "par pur arrivisme, peut-être dans l'espoir d'obtenir de l'archevêque de Paris un bénéfice".[21] The extent to which this argument should be

[14] R. C. Knight, *Racine et la Grèce*, Paris, 1950, p.15
[15] Ibid, p.35
[16] Ibid, p.155
[17] Lucien Goldmann, *Le Dieu caché*, p.382
[18] Philippe Sellier, *Augustinisme et la littérature, v. II*, p.246
[19] Raymond Picard, *La carrière de Jean Racine*, nouvelle édition revue et augmentée, Paris, 1961, p.28
[20] Philippe Sellier, *Augustinisme et la littérature II*, p.220
[21] Ibid, p.219

believed is debatable. Racine's criticism of Nicole's *Visionnaires* was compounded by his affairs with actresses such as Du Parc, and his adulterous relationship with Champmeslé, after which his relatives could not remain associated with him. There is evidence that his aunt wrote to him, probably in 1676, calling on him to consider his salvation.[22]

There seems to have been no contact between the dramatist and many of the Jansenists between the spring of 1667 and the beginning of 1677. This break in relations was almost unavoidable when the harsh view of the theatre in the mid 1660s is taken into consideration. 1664 saw a ban on all productions of Molière's *Tartuffe*, whilst his *Dom Juan* was also banned the following year.[23] Nicole's work on the theatre reflected the view of many during this decade. Despite this, Racine did retain some connections with some of his old acquaintances, including Nicolas Vitart and the Luynes family. According to Rohou, these were people "favorables à Port-Royal mais qui acceptent un écrivain de théâtre".[24] In fact it even seems that he may still have had dealings with Arnauld d'Andilly – "le plus mondain des Solitaires" – and could have aided the Jansenist in his preparation of a collection of Christian poetry.[25]

It has been argued that it was around the time of the production of Racine's *Phèdre* that his relations with the majority of the Jansenists began to ease. Many critics believe that they could not help but admire the play for its portrayal of the sinful lust of men, whilst it has been suggested that the dramatist wrote the play "en vue d'un...rapprochement".[26] However Mesnard has declared that the *solitaires* "n'auraient pu admettre que la punition des vices et la récompense des vertus fussent suffisantes pour ôter tout danger au spectacle dramatique".[27] He also suggests that although Racine may have wanted to renew his relationship with Port-Royal, he had not changed his opinion that "le théâtre est innocent"; he "n'envisage pas explicitement de l'abandonner".[28]

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[22] Jean Mesnard, 'Racine, Nicole et Lancelot', in Gilles Declercq et Michèle Rosellini (eds), *Jean Racine 1699-1999*, pp.291-372 (p.356)
[23] Jean Rohou, *Jean Racine*, p.228
[24] Ibid, p.85
[25] Philippe Sellier, *Augustinisme et la littérature II*, p.221
[26] Ibid
[27] Jean Mesnard, 'Racine, Nicole et Lancelot', p.358
[28] Ibid, p.359

Even so, Racine did appear to abandon his theatrical career, and his priorities seemed to be changing. His affair with Champmeslé ended in 1676, whilst his aunt's pleas that he should settle down were answered by his marriage in June 1677 to a relative of the Jansenist Vitart. The blessing at the wedding was given by Quesnel, an important figure in the development in the later stages of the Jansenist movement.[29] It has been reported that his wife had not seen any of his plays and that his children were "raised in severe piety and forbidden to attend the theater".[30] Clark asserts that his later letters display a "fervent and sincere piety".[31] In 1688 he demonstrated his new opinion of the acting profession by commenting on the conduct of a former mistress: he deplored "l'obstination avec laquelle cette pauvre malheureuse refuse de renoncer à la comédie".[32]

However there are other explanations for his temporary separation from the theatre. As Rohou has explained, "ce n'est pas une crise suivie d'une retraite et d'une conversion religieuse qui est intervenue en 1677, mais une éclatante promotion".[33] Racine was offered the job of royal historiographer by Louis XIV, the crowning glory to his career. If he had renounced the theatre in favour of religious contemplation, then it is unlikely that he would have accepted a position that would add to his fame and glory. His one desire

> n'était pas de s'exprimer ni de propager une vision de la condition humaine, mais d'être reconnu par l'élite sociale et surtout par le roi, et de consacrer cette reconnaissance par sa propre élévation.[34]

However, there must have been some level of rapprochement between the dramatist and the Jansenists during this period. The fact that Racine asked to be buried in the cemetery at Port-Royal, "aux pieds de la fosse de M. Hamon", has been utilised as a means of

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[29] Philippe Sellier, *Augustinisme et la littérature II*, p.247
[30] Mary Pittas-Herschbach, *Time and Space in Euripides and Racine: The Hippolytos of Euripides and Racine's Phèdre*, New York, 1990, p.100
[31] A.F.B. Clark, *Jean Racine*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1939, p.230
[32] Philippe Sellier, *Augustinisme et la littérature II*, p.250
[33] Jean Rohou, *Jean Racine: entre sa carrière, son œuvre et son Dieu*, p.336
[34] Ibid, p.339

emphasising the dramatist's final reconciliation with his former friends.[35] Whatever his motive, he felt the need to be buried at the place where he had spent most of his youth.

It is difficult to guess what Racine's actual view of the Jansenist movement may have been. Their opinions on the theatre – and on this type of *divertissement* in general – means that it is difficult to reconcile Racine with this particular religious view. In order to study this idea more closely, this research will concentrate on his last three plays, since these are generally held to portray the highest level of Jansenist influence. Obviously, this is not to suggest that his early plays have no interest at all. Indeed they often depict themes that are of great interest to any research on the Jansenist affect on Racinian drama.

La Thébaïde, which was first performed in 1664, is important in that it demonstrates Racine's early fascination with fate, free will and destiny. In his *Préface* he describes the Oedipus legend as "le sujet le plus tragique de l'antiquité".[36] He chose to ignore precedents set by other authors who had also produced plays on the same legend.[37] Thus, whilst he does introduce the idea that the gods are in some way to blame for the events, he does not necessarily suggest that this view is to be believed.

In the very first scene, Jocaste highlights her submission to the gods. She believes that it is the gods who have precipitated current events, whilst she is powerless to change the course of history. She proclaims that "ni prière ni pleurs ne m'ont de rien servi" and calls on the "juste ciel" to support her "faiblesse". The crimes committed by her two sons are portrayed as the just succession to those "que le père et la mère ont commis". This is no surprise when the audience considers that they come from "un sang incestueux". It would be astonishing if they were "vertueux".

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[35] Philippe Sellier, *Augustinisme et la littérature II*, p.221

[36] Jean Racine, *Œuvres complètes, v.I: Théâtre et poésie*, Georges Forestier (ed), Paris, 1999, p.119

[37] According to Zimmermann, Seneca's version of the legend gave less importance to destiny than other adaptations; he highlighted the essentially innocent nature of the central character and blamed events on the malign influence of Fate. The brothers were thus able to avoid their own crime since their lineage was not polluted. (Éléonore M. Zimmermann, *La liberté et le destin dans le théâtre de Jean Racine, suivie de deux essais sur le théâtre de Jean Racine*, Saratoga, 1982, p.56) Rohou, on the other hand, emphasised the fact that the crimes of Oedipus and his sons were crimes against nature that obviously had to be punished (ibid, p.57).

Most of the statements concerning the gods and the fate of the characters emanate from Jocaste or her daughter Antigone. Jocaste regrets Œdipe's "triste destinée" (I. v), and calls on the "ciel" to bring peace to the heart of Polinice in order that the situation can be resolved. Antigone implores the gods to bring back Hémon (I. vi). She believes that there is a small chance that the violence will not escalate since "les dieux quelquefois font de plus grands miracles" (II. i). It is Jocaste who feels the need to consult the oracle to find out the future of the family: as mortals they seem unable to resolve matters without some kind of outside aid. Yet the oracular predictions are portentous: "un ordre fatal" has demanded "le dernier du sang royal" (II. ii) in order to extirpate this sin. Antigone bewails this fate and demands to know why the gods have not been satisfied with "la mort" of Œdipe, and asks why "tout notre sang" should suffer for their anger (II. ii). Polinice also believes that "le ciel est injuste" (II. iii), although this view is based on the fact that he believes himself to be the rightful monarch rather than because he thinks his family is suffering too much for its past.

Jocaste lays the fault for her incestuous relationship with the gods themselves by stating, "ce fils infortuné / Vous-mêmes dans mes bras vous l'avez amené". She believes that mortals cannot be held totally responsible for their actions since it is the gods who guide them. In fact "jusques au bord du crime ils conduisent nos pas; / Ils nous le font commettre, et ne l'excusent pas". It almost seems that the gods "prennent...donc plaisir à faire des coupables" (III. ii). They appear to take pleasure in exacting their "vengeance fatale" (III. iii). Despite the queen's view of the gods, Antigone refuses to accept that the consequences of her family's sin are purely their fault. When Créon evokes "les dieux ennemis" as an explanation for the deaths on the battlefield, she retorts that he should not blame "la céleste colère" since it is his fault. Créon insists on the concept of "les destins contraires", but Antigone will not allow him to shift the focus of her hatred from himself to the heavens (V. iii).

Whilst it is the women in the play who evoke the power of the heavens on mortal lives most often, the men do not entirely deny the influence of the gods. Hémon also appears to believe in this divine power: he evokes the concept of his "triste destinée", but also hopes that "le ciel, touché de nos misères / Achèvera bientôt de réunir les frères" (II. i). Étéocle describes his feud with his brother as the "triste et fatal effet d'un sang incestueux". Their mutual hatred was acquired at the moment of conception as

punishment for the love of their parents. Whilst they acknowledge the existence of a higher power, they do not attribute to it the same level of influence as Jocaste and Antigone.

Of course there are many more references to the gods, but these are of a more general type, such as "le ciel" or "les dieux". Whilst these are of less importance than other examples, they remain important because they help to underline the essentially pagan morality of the play. Whilst some critics may attempt to link the idea of transmitted sin to original sin, this is not possible here. The divine presence in the play is polytheistic and malevolent. The genetic transference of the sin of Adam is arguably the just fate of man; he is entirely selfish and sinful. In a Christian world, original sin is deserved, whilst in this pagan world this particular punishment is severe. The lack of Christian message in this work is emphasised by the use of the oracle. Had Racine been aiming for a religious interpretation of the legend, he would probably have either left out this pagan device, or even emphasised its false nature. Instead he utilises it as an aid to his plot: the audience believes that the death of Ménécée will act as the fulfilment of the oracular predictions, but instead the gods have demanded the death of the whole family.

For the most part, it is the more helpless characters that emphasise the power of the gods. Jocaste and Antigone are unable to convince the brothers that their feud will lead to disaster for the family, so they lay the blame elsewhere. Hémon is also weak in that he loves Antigone but is no more able to resolve the situation than she is. The characters with the true power rarely evoke the gods since they know that they are responsible for their own actions. It is only the weak who turn to the heavens and refuse to accept their own faults. As Zimmermann has suggested, the final destruction of the whole family "n'est pas un acte de justice des dieux, mais le résultat des machinations de Créon".[38] Racine introduces the idea of divine power but then shows that it is only an excuse for the weak; there is no evidence that the gods are influencing the events at all. It is evident that the debate on predestination and free will in this work is certainly not Jansenist in origin.

[38] Éléonore M. Zimmermann, *La liberté et le destin dans le théâtre de Jean Racine*, p.58

After *La Thébaïde* Racine moved away from the theme of fate, which hardly features in his second play, *Alexandre le Grand*. Here there are scant references to the gods, and those that do exist are the usual evocations of "le ciel" and "la destinée". If Racine had intended to portray the religious doctrine of the Jansenists in *La Thébaïde*, why would he not want to do so in this second work? The Oedipus legend is inseparable from the debate on free will and fate and it would have been strange had Racine not mentioned these concepts. His aim was to show these ideas, rather than to depict a Jansenist viewpoint. With the exception of *Esther* and *Athalie*, it is the plays based on Hellenistic legends in which the theme of destiny plays its greatest role. Those plays based on other periods of history are much less fatalistic.

Racine's third play is based on the Andromache legend and was important in establishing Racine's reputation. In the *Préface* to the play he explains that his characters cannot be perfect since "la punition d'un homme de bien exciterait plus l'indignation que la pitié du spectateur". Thus they are flawed not because he was aiming to give a view of man as corrupted by sin, but rather because he intended to follow Aristotle's views on hamartia. Therefore the characters must possess "une vertu capable de faiblesse" in order that they "tombent dans le malheur par quelque faute qui les fasse plaindre sans les faire détester".[39] The characters are fallible because this makes the play more successful in the eyes of the audience.

As with *La Thébaïde*, the influence of the gods and the fatalistic implications of destiny play an important role in *Andromaque*. This is particularly true for Oreste, whose actions in this work can be seen as a precursor to the murder of his mother, Clytemnestra.[40] His preoccupation with destiny is emphasised from the beginning of the play. The opening lines of the work refer to his "fortune", which he hopes will take "une face nouvelle" (I. i). Pylade also refers to the power of the gods: he was afraid that "le ciel, par un cruel secours" had given Oreste the death for which he so longed. Instead he hopes that "un destin plus heureux" has brought Oreste to Épire. This latter comment suggests that Oreste is being guided by some higher force, a concept he himself

[39] Jean Racine, *Œuvres complètes, v.I*, p.198

[40] J.P. Short, 'The Concept of Fate in the Tragedies of Racine', in J.C. Ireson, I.D. McFarlane and Garnet Rees (eds), *Studies in French Literature, Presented to H.W. Lawton*, Oxford, 1968, pp.315-327 (p.317). Here Short explains that Racine does not utilise the ancient legend of Oreste; instead he concentrates on his ill-fated love for Hermione.

emphasises by declaring that no one "peut savoir le destin qui m'amène". He does not know whether he has come there to "chercher ou la vie ou la mort" since his "sort" is unknown to him (I. i). Whilst some may argue that Oreste is clearly affected by the force of destiny, this is not entirely true. He is utilising these concepts to deflect blame for his actions away from himself. In truth he is free to act as he wishes, he is just too weak to accept responsibility.

Oreste claims that it is his fate to feel an intense, but unreciprocated, passion for Hermione. He speaks to her of the "aveuglement funeste" of his love, whilst he believes that it is "le destin d'Oreste...de venir sans cesse adorer [ses] attraits" (II. ii). Love is not important for her: she states that this passion "ne règle pas le sort d'une princesse" (III. ii). In this way she differs from her mother, for whom love was the ultimate force in life. Hermione wishes to be the mistress of her own destiny, yet she refuses to accept the blame when she attempts to do so. Thus, despite coercing Oreste into killing her lover, she blames him when Pyrrhus is murdered, even though he is not the real perpetrator. It is easier for her to blame the weak Oreste than to take responsibility for her own actions. She would rather appear to be the victim of fate or the gods than admit that she is the victim of her own jealousy.

Oreste seems mostly resigned to accept what he believes is his destiny. He feels that heaven has worked tirelessly "au soin de me punir", whilst its hatred "a pris plaisir à former ma misère". He was only born "pour servir d'exemple à [sa] colère" (V. v). However he does appear to believe that mortals do have some power over their own lives. He declares that "chacun peut à son choix disposer de son âme", whilst he blames Hermione for his situation "aussi bien que la fortune" (III. ii). Even he sees that there is some degree of free will in life.

Oreste is the only character in the play who attributes a great importance to the power of destiny and the gods. His antithesis is Andromaque, for whom free will is essential. This is emphasised when Céphise tells her that she can be "la maîtresse" of her own destiny (III. viii). If she wishes to keep her son, Andromaque must take her future into her own hands and act. By the end of the play the audience has seen her do just this; Racine implies that this show of power has restored her glory, and the throne may well be in her hands. As with many characters, she invokes the gods with exclamations such as "ô

dieux", yet this is a sign of the pressure under which she finds herself rather than a true attempt to introduce a theological theme into the play.

Certain characters claim that they are affected by their family history. Thus Oreste's decline into madness, although not specifically linked to his past in this play, could be viewed in the light of his troubled family history. In addition, Pyrrhus makes many references to the fact that he is Achilles' son, which, he believes, entitles him to respect. It also suggests that he has some genetic right to the power that was once wielded by his father, the greatest of all warriors. Hermione believes that, as the daughter of Helen of Troy, she should be entitled to become Pyrrhus' wife. It is a position to which her inherited standing entitles her. However, Racine is careful to show that, whatever they may think, these characters have not been wholly formed by the actions of their ancestors. In fact they are much weaker than their respective relations. Thus, whilst Achilles was a strong and magnificent warrior, Pyrrhus is weak and submits to his love for his enemy. Furthermore although Hermione is the daughter of a fabulously beautiful woman, she does not possess enough charm to retain the interest of her lover. There is no way that their traits – good or bad – have been passed down from their ancestors.

As a play based on Greek legend, it is surprising that *Andromaque* is not more fatalistic in tone. With the exception of Oreste, the characters fail to acknowledge the power of the gods. Their misery is inspired by mortals. Oreste is deluded by his increasing madness into believing that his fate has been inflicted by malevolent gods. Again, it is only the weakest character that feels the need to blame divine power for his situation: he cannot accept that he is responsible for his own actions. No other character accepts his argument that his situation is the fault of fate; instead, as Zimmermann notes, they see him as weak or melancholic.[41]

After *Andromaque* Racine again abandoned the Hellenistic stage and turned to other subjects. In *Britannicus* he is not so concerned with the concept of predestination, although there is still some discussion of free will. For example Néron is presented as "un monstre naissant"; the audience is led to question to what extent this development in his character has been brought about by those around him. Burrhus comments that he

[41] Éléonore M. Zimmermann, *La liberté et le destin dans le théâtre de Jean Racine*, p.62

has been "vertueux jusqu'ici"; at the beginning of the play there is nothing to suggest that he will ever be any different (IV. iii). Whilst Néron's sinful nature could be explained by the influence of Agrippine,[42] it does not seem that his nature has been inherited. The fact that his malevolence only comes to the fore once the play begins suggests that this part of his character is only just developing; it was not necessarily present before this point. As Zimmermann has noted, "le thème de l'hérédité n'est jamais repris explicitement et aucun lien n'est établi avec le destin ou la volonté des dieux".[43]

In fact Néron is a rather weak character; he is influenced by the advice of others, particularly when it is given by one of the more malevolent characters. For her part, Agrippine appears to believe that it is inevitable that her son will eventually act against her. Thus it is no surprise to her that "contre Britannicus Néron s'est déclaré" (I. i). Racine takes care to demonstrate the fact that up until this point there has been no indication that Néron will act thus. However Burrhus advises him that his mother is "toujours redoutable"; it is her power which is a threat to the young emperor (III. i). Racine does not develop themes such as predestination and free will here. There is no sense that this was the only way in which his character could have developed. Agrippine gives him the opportunity to unite Junie and Britannicus, but he chooses not to take this path.

The fact that Néron is not the only corrupted character in his environment is emphasised by Junie when she declares that she has only known the emperor and his court for one day, but it is already clear that "dans cette cour...tout ce qu'on dit est loin de ce qu'on pense" (V. i). However, the fact that the court is corrupt does not mean that Racine wished to suggest that all men were corrupt. He certainly does not give a religious slant to this view. The only real introduction of any form of religious sentiment comes at the end of the play when Junie declares her intention to join the Vestal virgins. She may wish to escape society, but only because there is nothing left there for her once Britannicus is dead. Goldmann has suggested that the subject of the play is "le conflit entre Junie et le monde",[44] yet this hardly seems to be possible when we consider the

[42] Éléonore M. Zimmermann, *La liberté et le destin dans le théâtre de Jean Racine*, pp.64-65
[43] Ibid, p.65
[44] Lucien Goldmann, *Le Dieu caché*, p.367

fact that Racine does not emphasise the corruption of the world and the benefits of a withdrawal from society. Such themes are only used generally and are secondary to the main action.

Racine's next play, *Bérénice*, also contains little evidence of any sort of Jansenist influence. Zimmermann has suggested that the Roman law which forbids an emperor from marrying a queen "a tout le caractère d'un décret des dieux",[45] although this would only suggest the presence of a pagan power rather than a Christian influence. There are a certain number of references in the play to destiny and the gods, which are also pagan in nature. On seeing Antiochus for the first time in the play, Bérénice declares, "le ciel sait qu'au milieu des honneurs qu'il m'envoie / Je n'attendais que vous pour témoin de ma joie" (I. iv). It is evident, though, that this reference is only metaphorical: there is never any suggestion that the gods are really guiding either the events, or are influencing the decisions of the main characters. Indeed Zimmerman has suggested that the role of destiny "n'est pas examiné et les intentions des dieux ne sont pas mises en cause".[46] In fact it is in this play that "pour la première fois chez Racine, il y a une participation active de la volonté des personnages avec les décrets du destin".[47]

The fact that the characters at least believe that they are free to choose their own destiny is emphasised at various points. Titus declares that he is "maître de [son] destin": he asserts his right to either choose to remain with Bérénice or to relinquish her forever (II. ii). However his courage to choose duty over love often wavers. He declares that the glory of being emperor "est cruelle" since it necessitates his abandonment of Bérénice. In fact it is in his weakest moments that Titus calls on the gods. He declares, "j'atteste les dieux / Que toujours Bérénice est présente à mes yeux". Bérénice recognises this weakness and asks, "pourquoi même du ciel attester la puissance?" (II. iv) She too calls for divine help once she realises what Titus is planning, and declares "ah! Plût au ciel que, sans blesser ta gloire, / Un rival plus puissant voulût tenter ma foi" (II. v). Once again, it is only when they are weak that the characters call on the gods, or blame them. Furthermore, the debates that take place in this play are centred on love, something that the Jansenists found reprehensible.

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[45] Éléonore M. Zimmermann, *La liberté et le destin dans le théâtre de Jean Racine*, p.67
[46] Ibid, p.66
[47] Ibid, p.69

Racine's next play *Bajazet* followed in the fashion for works based in the Ottoman Empire during this period. It is therefore inevitable that there are few references to the Christian form of religion within this play, although this does not mean that there are no references to religion at all. Osmin comments that it is "un arrêt du ciel qui réprouve Amurat" (I. i), whilst Acomat asserts that "le peuple suit le frein de la religion" (I. ii). Atalide makes the largest number of references to the gods. When her love for Bajazet has been uncovered she states, "le ciel s'est déclaré contre mon artifice"; she adds that "le ciel seul sait combien [j'ai] versé de larmes" (I. iv). Later, when discussing whether or not Bajazet should marry Roxane, Atalide insists that she may well obey her "destin", which is evidently to die (II. v). She also asks why the gods have allowed her "funeste amour" to put Bajazet in danger (V. i). By externalising the fault in this way, Atalide is attempting to blame the loss of her letter to Bajazet on the fact that her love existed in the first place. She may blame the gods for her situation, but it is the fact that she was overcome by emotion which made her drop the letter.

It seems almost inevitable by this point that it should be the weaker characters who either turn to the heavens or blame them in some way for their situation. Atalide cannot accept any responsibility for her part in Bajazet's downfall. In addition Racine does not introduce ideas such as predestination and free will. Instead he comments on the fact that human emotions are the same in any country. Love motivates people to do great, and terrible, things no matter where they come from. Such themes are universal to all of Racine's secular plays.

The nature of love is also important in Racine's next play, *Mithridate*. It is interesting that Racine had the opportunity here to discuss the theme of hereditary sin. Mithridate's former wife had been a traitor who had helped the Romans, the sworn enemies of the King. In fact Xipharès spends much of the play commenting on this sin and hoping that Mithridate will not think him capable of the same treachery. However, as was the case in *Britannicus*, Racine does not study this theme too deeply: he was obviously not concerned with portraying this idea in this particular play.

Instead the work concentrates on the discussion of love and its many forms. Pharnace, believing his father to be dead, has suggested to Monime that they should marry, but such a marriage would be "plus cruel que la mort" for her (I. ii). However, Mithridate

returns and is shocked to discover his son's plan. He believes that, despite Pharnace's plan, he can trust Xipharès, although this trust is obviously misplaced (II. v). It is important that Racine does not emphasise this ignorance in order to highlight an Augustinian viewpoint. He could have given a religious slant to the work by emphasising the fact that none of the characters can be trusted to tell the truth. Instead he utilises this lack of knowledge as a plot device: the audience realises the truth and waits eagerly for Mithridate to find out too. When Pharnace does inform him of Xipharès' duplicity, the King resorts to blaming the gods. Again it is when he is weak that Mithridate blames the gods for misguiding him.

Xipharès also blames the gods for his unhappiness. He believes that he is "un malheureux que le destin poursuit". He asserts that it is the heavens which have robbed him of "l'amitié de [son] père" and made his mother a traitor. However Racine obviously does not want the audience to take these assertions too seriously, since the speech ends with Xipharès' declaration that he has been betrayed by "un secret ennemi" (IV. ii). The audience realises that this is simply not true: it is Monime herself who told Mithridate of their love. Xipharès is mistaken about this, so the rest of his speech is not necessarily trustworthy. Once again there is no discussion of themes such as free will and predestination, whilst what mention there is of the gods is made in moments of weakness rather than spoken by rational beings. It is only in weakness that these characters turn to the gods.

It was not until the production of *Iphigénie* in 1674 that Racine returned to Greek drama. Zimmermann has stated that from this point there is "un changement fondamental" in his perspective. She believes that the theme of destiny is being given "une place croissante", whilst he is dealing increasingly with themes such as predestination, free will and destiny.[48] Sellier has suggested that the Jansenist influence on Racine became more evident at this point in Racine's career. In this work "l'importance de l'amour a reculé" whilst "la Bible et la liturgie catholique – absentes des pièces précédentes – surgissent dans la théophanie finale".[49] However whilst the theme of love may not be quite as evident as it is in some of the earlier plays, it is still

[48] Éléonore M. Zimmermann, *La liberté et le destin dans le théâtre de Jean Racine*, p.39
[49] Philippe Sellier, *Augustinisme et la littérature II*, p.247

an important part of the events. In fact it soon becomes evident that the themes of destiny and predestination are not as straightforward as they may at first seem.

At the beginning of the play it seems as if it is the gods who are controlling events. Although the opening line suggests Agamemnon's power – he declares to Arcas, "oui, c'est Agamemnon, c'est ton roi qui t'éveille" – the following lines contradict this:

> Heureux qui, satisfait de son humble fortune,
> Libre du joug superbe où je suis attaché,
> Vit dans l'état obscur où les dieux l'ont caché.

This position contrasts with Agamemnon's former glory, when the gods were "toujours si complaisants" to his wishes. It is the oracle which has altered his state. It has declared,

> Vous armez contre Troie une puissance vaine,
> Si, dans un sacrifice auguste et solennel,
> Une fille du sang d'Hélène,
> De Diane, en ces lieux, n'ensanglante l'autel.
> Pour obtenir les vents que le ciel vous dénie,
> Sacrifiez Iphigénie.

The King condemns the gods for these instructions, yet he is still motivated by his desire for "pouvoir" and "grandeur". He must choose whether or not to sacrifice his daughter for the sake of success in the war. As Zimmermann has shown, the oracle "ne privilégie pas une solution par rapport à l'autre".[50] The fate of Iphigénie must be decided by her father alone.[51]

However, rather than accepting responsibility for the sacrifice, Agamemnon chooses to blame the gods. He cannot believe that they would sanction such a "noir sacrifice", although he is willing to carry it out anyway. His only hope is to keep Iphigénie away from Aulide; he declares that if she gets there then the people will demand her sacrifice

[50] Éléonore M. Zimmermann, *La liberté et le destin dans le théâtre de Jean Racine*, p.76
[51] Ibid, p.77

(I. i). However this could be seen as a sign that he does not want to make the decision himself: if she is not there, he can hardly sacrifice her. He does not want to think that it is he alone who should be blamed for the sacrifice of his daughter.

In contrast to this weakness, Achille is a strong and dominant warrior. He asserts his personal glory, and whilst he acknowledges the fact that the gods are "les maîtres souverains", he believes that his own glory is "dans [ses] propres mains", thus divine orders should not necessarily be obeyed (I. ii). Achille's prisoner Eriphile also has misgivings about divine power and sees the gods as malevolent. She declares that "un effrayant oracle" has predicted her future, which is that she cannot uncover her origins "sans périr". She believes that the heavens have enjoyed "une joie inhumaine" in treating her this way (II. i). However Doris is the only character who doubts the interpretation of the oracle: she declares, "un oracle toujours se plaît à se cacher, / Toujours avec un sens il en présente un autre" (II. i).

Of course the oracle's false nature becomes apparent when the truth about Eriphile's origins becomes clearer: she is the Iphigénie who should be sacrificed. Some would undoubtedly argue that the fact that the prophecy is not what it seems is a comment on pagan religions. Indeed it could be asserted that there is no hope of truth outside the Christian religion. However this is not the case here. Racine uses the oracle as a plot device that allows him to add an element of surprise. It has been suggested that Eriphile's fate is a punishment from the gods for her attempt to lead Iphigénie to the sacrificial altar, but since they have demanded her death before this takes place, this explanation seems unlikely. Others may suggest that Racine is attempting to portray the vengeful Christian God here, a God who would demand punishment even before the sin was committed. However, as Zimmermann affirms, "rien n'indique que de telles réflexions dussent nous fournir la clef de ce drame païen".[52]

In fact the play depicts a wholly pagan world, where the characters depend on the oracles and the gods to guide and influence their actions. Whilst there is certainly a discussion on the nature of free will and predestination, Racine discusses these themes within a pagan context and in a general way. In fact it seems evident that all of his plays

[52] Éléonore M. Zimmermann, *La liberté et le destin dans le théâtre de Jean Racine*, p.78

up until this point are essentially non-religious. Whilst those based on Greek legends evidently depict such ideas to the greatest extent, they are obviously not intending to depict any form of religious doctrine. Instead Racine has taken these themes and used them as points of interest in his work: his primary concern is to please the audience.

The turning point in Racine's work is generally held to occur with *Phèdre*. It is with the last of his secular plays that "l'attraction de Port-Royal devient manifeste" for Sellier,[53] who has also argued that the work was "consciemment dédiée à Port-Royal".[54] In the *Préface* Racine does indeed appear to be conscious of countering any criticisms which could be made on the moral worth of his work. He states that he has not written another play where

> la vertu soit plus mise en jour que dans celle-ci; les moindres fautes y sont sévèrement punies: la seule pensée du crime y est regardée avec autant d'horreur que le crime même; les faiblesses de l'amour y passent pour de vraies faiblesses.[55]

In order to combat arguments concerning the morality of depicting the passions on stage, he comments that "les passions n'y sont présentées aux yeux que pour montrer tout le désordre dont elles sont cause". He defends his motives by declaring that this should be "le but que tout homme qui travaille pour le public doit se proposer".[56] This would seemingly endear him to his former masters, but there should be a note of caution even here. It seems impossible to accept that some Jansenists would accept this assertion as a valid argument for the portrayal of the passions on the stage.

In addition Racine states that it was this aim which the authors of antiquity had in mind when writing their plays: "leur théâtre était une école où la vertu n'était pas moins bien enseignée que dans les écoles des philosophes".[57] It is unlikely that the Jansenist doctrine which condemned both philosophers and pagans as wilfully disobeying the will of God would accept the idea that Ancient theatre was something to be admired. Whilst

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[53] Philippe Sellier, *Augustinisme et la littérature II*, p.228
[54] Ibid
[55] Jean Racine, *Œuvres complètes, v.I*, p.819
[56] Ibid
[57] Ibid

they may have utilised such drama in their teaching, the masters of Port-Royal did not accept the possibility of pagan virtue. Thus Racine continues to demonstrate the wide gulf which existed between his own beliefs and those of his former teachers.

Despite this he does declare that he hopes that his portrayal of virtue in the play will be

> un moyen de réconcilier la tragédie avec quantité de personnes célèbres par leur piété et par leur doctrine, qui l'ont condamnée dans ces derniers temps, et qui en jugeraient sans doute plus favorablement, si les auteurs songeaient autant à instruire leurs spectateurs qu'à les divertir.[58]

This statement is often utilised as evidence of an appeal to the Jansenists to accept the moral worth of theatre. However it seems obvious that for many Jansenists this appeal would demonstrate the false pride held by Racine. He believes that his play is so good, and displays the sinful nature of the passions so well, that even the strictest doctrine would agree with such a use of the theatre. This is evidently not the case and some of the stricter Jansenists would surely reject the possibility that a work based on pagan themes could display Christian belief.

Indeed it should be noted that the great majority of the *Préface* is concerned with more worldly values. Racine emphasises the play's origin in Euripides: although some aspects of the play have been changed, many of its constituent parts find their genesis in this Greek version of the play. He declares that he is unsurprised that Phèdre as a character has found success, both in Antiquity and during the seventeenth century, because she has "toutes les qualités qu'Aristote demande dans le héros de la tragédie, et qui sont propres à exciter la compassion et la terreur".[59] There are only secular reasons for the play's success. It has not been popular because its themes can be seen as worthy religious teachings.

Phèdre is continually highlighted as an example of the believer from whom grace has been withdrawn. There should be nothing positive to say about her during the play's action. However she is evidently portrayed as having some good qualities: she is the

[58] Jean Racine, *Œuvres complètes, v.I*, p.819
[59] Ibid, p.817

first to recognise, and also to abhor, her incestuous love. Racine also admits that she is "engagée, par sa destinée et par la colère des dieux, dans une passion illégitime".[60] If he were trying to emphasise Jansenist beliefs within his work then he would not be able to suggest that destiny and pagan gods had had any affect on her actions at all. This is emphasised when he explains that "elle parle avec une confusion qui fait bien voir que son crime est plutôt une punition des dieux qu'un mouvement de sa volonté".[61] In Jansenist theology, the will of fallen man is drawn irrevocably towards evil, but he remains ultimately responsible for his actions. It would not be possible to suggest that Phèdre's will had been bypassed by the heavens if her existence as a representative of Jansenist theology were to be asserted.

Despite these arguments, Sellier has described how Boileau, a friend to both Racine and the Jansenists, acted as an intermediary between the two parties so that they could be reconciled. After the publication of *Phèdre,* Boileau went to Arnauld and pleaded for his friend. The theologian supposedly recognised that the work could be rendered "légitime" when considered as an explanation of the need for grace.[62] However this should not necessarily be seen as a wholehearted acceptance by the Jansenists of their former pupil. It is essential to remember that there are still important issues surrounding the very nature of the theatre which would have continually divided the more strict Jansenists from Racine. In addition the fact that the dramatist was reconciled with Arnauld does not necessarily mean that he was reconciled with all of the Jansenists. The actions of Arnauld had divided the group on other occasions, so it is perfectly reasonable to expect that it would also be split over this issue.[63] It became obvious in the Chapter One that the nature of Jansenism changed as the century progressed; Racine certainly had little in common with the members of the early movement, whose beliefs were in some ways stricter than those of later Jansenist figures.

In addition, Picard has commented that critics have often made too much of the relevance of the preface to *Phèdre.* They do not come to the same conclusions when

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[60] Jean Racine, *Œuvres complètes, v.I,* p.819
[61] Ibid
[62] Philippe Sellier, *Augustinisme et la littérature II,* p.249
[63] Some Jansenists disagreed with Arnauld's continual approval of Descartes's philosophical system. They believed that theology could have no part in any form of philosophy, and that the two disciplines were mutually exclusive. The introduction of Cartesianism into the works emanating from Port-Royal was deplored by some members of the community.

considering the prefaces to *Tartuffe* or *Attila*, so why should they single out Racine in this way? He also adds that "tous les dramaturges contemporains" were forced to defend their art against invective from the Church, since "le problème de la moralité du théâtre était d'actualité".[64] Thus his preface to this work should not automatically be considered as an appeal to the Jansenists.

Racine was dealing with a legend which had been reworked over many centuries, but his play differs greatly from its antecedents. Newton believes that "la façon dont Racine conçoit son sujet est diamétralement opposé à celle d'Euripide" in that the latter portrays Phèdre as "un instrument destiné à précipiter la tragédie d'Hippolyte".[65] There is in Racine little driving force leading Phèdre to her destiny, but rather she is responsible for her own actions. However this is not to say that there is a specifically Jansenist leaning to the work for Newton, since she believes that all such references can be explained "soit par une association littéraire, soit par la psychologie de la passion".[66] She declares that if the concept of fatality had been a novelty in Racine's work, and was not to be found in any of the numerous predecessors, then a Jansenist interpretation of the play would indeed be necessary. However this idea of fatality "fait partie intégrante d'un sujet plus ancien que les écrits de Saint Augustin lui-même", and thus cannot necessitate "une intention religieuse" to the work. Instead *Phèdre* is "une étude de l'amour, la plus fatale de toutes les passions"; its subject has "une inspiration païenne".[67]

Indeed although Racine may have been writing for a Christian audience there are still many pagan elements within the play. There are various references made to the gods, whether directly or indirectly. For example Hippolyte declares that

> Tout a changé de face
> Depuis que sur ces bords les dieux ont envoyé
> La fille de Minos et de Pasiphaé (I. i).

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[64] Raymond Picard, *La carrière de Jean Racine*, p.305
[65] Winifred Newton, *Le thème de Phèdre et d'Hippolyte dans la littérature française*, Paris, 1939, p.105
[66] Ibid, p.118
[67] Ibid, p.123

Œnone calls on the "dieux puissants" that they may be appeased by her "pleurs" (I. iii) Whilst there are numerous exclamations made calling on the "dieux", there are also various references made to individual heavenly figures. Hippolyte explains to Phèdre that Thésée will return as "Neptune le protège, et ce dieu tutélaire / Ne sera pas en vain imploré par mon père" (II. v). Thésée himself recalls the god's promise to reward his efforts by fulfilling "le premier de [ses] vœux" and calls on him to revenge a "malheureux père" (IV. ii).

In addition, the concept that it is the gods who are controlling events is continually emphasised by various characters. Hippolyte believes that Aricie is "d'un sang fatal", an idea which can only jeopardise their relations (I. i). Phèdre invokes the gods and blames them for her current suffering. An ancient legend had explained how the Sun had surprised Venus in the arms of Mars, a discovery that he had not kept to himself. Venus had thus vowed to claim vengeance on all of the Sun's descendants, including Phèdre. She thus asserts that she is an "objet infortuné des vengeances célestes", whilst she believes that the gods "ont allumé le feu fatal" in her heart. She also adds that "Ces dieux…se sont fait une gloire cruelle / De séduire le cœur d'une faible mortelle" (II. v).

She continually emphasises her innocence by transferring the blame to the gods. However the fact that she impugns the heavens in the plural lends little credibility to her accusation. Had she held Venus, as a single entity, culpable throughout the play then the audience would probably be more inclined to give credence to her assertions. The extent to which the audience should accept the responsibility of the gods is open to interpretation. Despite claiming in the *Préface* that Phèdre is not entirely to blame for her actions, her claims to be a victim are not wholly credible. It is, however, certain that if Racine had been attempting to provide a Jansenist slant to his work then he would have left no room for discussion and would have rendered his character totally blameworthy, with no room for sympathy. Under Jansenist doctrine, the fallen man deserves his situation and is so corrupt as to be unworthy of any sympathy whatsoever.

Racine emphasises the fallibility of his characters in various different ways. Whilst in other versions of the play Hippolyte is seen as perfect and untouched by the passions, this is not the case in this work. Quite apart from the fault which has led him to love his father's prisoner, he also suffers from the sin of pride. He is jealous of Thésée's exploits

and wishes that he too could be as successful and as glorious as the king. He states that there have been "aucuns monstres par moi domptés jusqu'aujourd'hui" (I. i). He regrets that he is the "fils inconnu d'un si glorieux père" (III. v). The love of glory could hardly be seen as something suitable for a Christian audience.

The most culpable character of the play is undoubtedly Phèdre, yet she attempts to assert her supposed weakness from her very first appearance: she declares to Œnone, "je ne me soutiens plus; ma force m'abandonne" (I. iii). This is the first example of the way in which the queen tries to deflect responsibility away from herself. This is shown through the bipartite nature of the line: in the first half Phèdre admits that she is weak, whilst in the second half she blames this on the fact that her force has gone. Thus if she is unable to be strong, this is not her fault. This concept is reiterated on various occasions during the play, and indeed in the very same scene, when she declares, "Tout m'afflige, et me nuit, et conspire à me nuire" (I. iii).

She continually tries to externalise the reason for her suffering, often blaming events on the gods. She asks, "Où laissé-je égarer mes vœux et mon esprit? / Je l'ai perdu: les dieux m'en ont ravi l'usage" (I. iii). At first she appears to be accepting that she has played a role in her own situation, yet she then blames her troubles on the gods. It could be argued that this lack of self-knowledge is proof of the Augustinian nature of the work. Yet it could also be said that the reverse is true. Phèdre is fully aware of her guilty nature and wishes to divert the blame elsewhere. In Jansenist theology, the relative ignorance of the sinner is emphasised, but Phèdre realises that she is committing a terrible fault. It could be argued that because she does not possess God's grace, she cannot hope to escape from her situation.

Phèdre wishes to die to escape her immoral love, but her motives for suicide are in fact far from simple. She does not want to die in order to save Thésée, or even Hippolyte, from the horrible truth, but rather in order to "prendre soin de [sa] gloire" (I. iii). She takes pride in her glory, even when she is suffering from such base passions as incestuous love. It seems unlikely that such improper motives would have attracted the

approval of the stricter adherents to Jansenist doctrine, whilst they could hardly approve of the queen's desire to commit suicide.[68]

It could be argued that Phèdre is a victim of her plotting nurse, since it is Œnone who actually accuses Hippolyte. However from the outset it is obvious that this is not the case. When Œnone is attempting to uncover the nature of the queen's grief, Phèdre hints at the object of her love. When Œnone guesses it is her stepson, the queen blames her for saying his name. The nurse is appalled by the truth: she declares, "Juste ciel! tout mon sang dans mes veines se glace! / O désespoir! ô crime! ô déplorable race!" (I. iii). It is only when she realises that Phèdre really does wish to die that she resolves to save her mistress at all costs. As a monarch, with an infinitely higher social standing, Phèdre has the moral imperative to set an example to her own servants, and thus cannot lay the blame on her nurse. She should have the moral integrity to act properly, and the fact that she does not is a comment on her corrupt character rather than an indication of her weakness. In addition she plays her own part in the attempted corruption of Hippolyte. She asks Œnone to tempt her stepson with the thought of political power in the hope that this will bring him to her. Even when she is planning to seduce Hippolyte, she still insists on blaming the gods for her situation. She deplores "implacable Vénus" and asserts that the goddess's "triomphe est parfait" (III. ii).

Furthermore once Œnone learns that Thésée is in fact alive and that he will return presently, she advises Phèdre to forget her love for Hippolyte and pleads, "Madame; rappelez votre vertu passée" (III. iii). Even the nurse has the moral integrity to realise that the queen should not continue in her pursuit of her stepson now that her husband is returning. Whilst it was acceptable to declare herself to Hippolyte when Thésée was presumed dead, it is far from acceptable now that he is known to be alive. Even now Phèdre cannot accept responsibility for what she has done, but blames Œnone for leading her there. She believes that if she had died that morning, she would have been "digne d'être pleurée", but as she has followed her nurse she will die "déshonorée". It is only under such pressure, and after the failure of her pleas, that the nurse concocts the idea of accusing Hippolyte before he can reveal the truth to Thésée. She asks, "pourquoi donc lui céder une victoire entière...osez l'accuser la première". Instead of refusing to

[68] Consider Saint-Cyran's views on suicide in *La Question royale*, mentioned in Chapter One.

partake in such a crime immediately, Phèdre's reaction is only to ask if she would dare "opprimer et noircir l'innocence" (III. iii). Whilst it is true that it is Œnone who does actually accuse Hippolyte, Phèdre does nothing to stop her, and can thus be blamed as much as the nurse, if not more.

Whilst Arnauld may have approved of the play in general, he was apparently disconcerted by the fact that Racine had invented the love between Hippolyte and Aricie. On the whole the Jansenists did not approve of this human love. Hippeau explains that for them it was "une maladie" and "une faute, un péché parce qu'il est un attachement humain qui voue à une créature une adoration réservée à Dieu".[69] For the majority of the Jansenists and their followers the celibate life was preferable because one's life should be devoted entirely to God. Marriage obviously had its place as a cure for concupiscence, but this should be "exempt de toute passion" and should be devoted to having children: this is "le mariage du devoir".[70] However there are dramatic reasons for the introduction of Aricie as Hippolyte's lover. Racine explains in his preface that he wished to give his character "quelque faiblesse qui le rendrait un peu coupable envers son père" without actually reducing "cette grandeur d'âme".[71] This weakness is his love for his father's enemy.

Hippolyte's love for Aricie is depicted by Racine in terms of animal passion. When he tells her of his love, he explains, "Dans le fond des forêts votre image me suit".[72] His favourite pastime of hunting has been supplanted by Aricie: he declares, "Mon arc, mes javelots, mon char, tout m'importune; / Je ne me souviens plus des leçons de Neptune". He even realises that Aricie may blush at "un amour si sauvage" (II. ii). This passion is far from faultless: not only does it contravene the wishes of Thésée but it also contributes to Hippolyte's death. If he had continued in his hunting, his horses would still have recognised his voice and would have responded to his appeals. Racine thus uses this love to precipitate the events at the end of the play.

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[69] Louis Hippeau, *Essai sur la morale de La Rochefoucauld*, Paris, 1967, pp.235-236
[70] Ibid, p.236
[71] Jean Racine, *Œuvres complètes, v.I*, p.818
[72] It is interesting to note that this depiction of animal passion is utilised by Sylvia Plath in her poem *Pursuit*, where she utilises this exact quote from *Phèdre* at the start of the poem. The poem itself is concerned with the dichotomy between the hunter and the hunted, the possessed and the possessor.

It could be said that during the course of the play the passions and the sins of the guilty characters are punished, leading to an assertion of great morality on the part of the author. However this concept is hard to accept, particularly because the only godly presence within the work is most definitely pagan. Racine has not particularly emphasised the Christian form of morality. In fact, the influence of any form of deity is not as strong as may at first be presumed. Those characters that are strong-willed – such as Thésée – call on the gods infrequently and only in order to achieve what they see as positive action. Most of the references made to the gods are made by the weaker characters, Phèdre and Œnone. Once again, they are utilising the power of the gods as an excuse for their own fallibility. The nurse may believe that "on ne peut vaincre sa destinée" (IV. vi), but the whole of the play suggests otherwise. If Phèdre had possessed the willpower to act differently, then Hippolyte need not have suffered his father's condemnation.

Furthermore the gods cannot be seen as a source of moral power either. Hippolyte believes that "l'équité des dieux" will justify him since he has never sinned against them, but he is deceived (V. i). It seems that there is no positive assertion of morality in the play. If most of the characters are representatives of fallen man, where is the counterbalance, the example of the faithful justified by God? The only positive note is that Thésée will adopt Aricie and give her a new position in the state, but there seems to be little theological justification for this. Racine has not portrayed her as an example of the elect, thus her reward at the end of the play is only a means by which the king can extirpate his own sins. If Racine really were attempting to depict a Jansenist world-view in his play then he would have rendered the moral message much more open and evident. It is therefore easy to agree with Gauthier when she states that Racine "n'écrit pas de tragédie janséniste. Il n'écrit pas non plus de tragédie augustinienne". For her, his rapprochement with the Jansenists was "pas déterminant" in the composition of this particular play.[73] If he uses themes such as free will, then he does so in a general way, without making any reference to their theological connections.

In fact when other versions of the legend are studied, it becomes obvious that some elements of Racine's play are to be found in earlier versions. Since they are present in

[73] Patricia Gauthier, *Racine: Phèdre*, Paris, 2003, p.70

other works, they cannot be used as evidence of his Jansenist tendencies. He was greatly influenced by Euripides, whose version of the Phaedra myth played an important role in the development of *Phèdre*. In Euripides' work the gods play a dominant role in the action, even though he is classed as the ancient dramatist who most questioned the nature – and even the existence – of the gods.[74] He concentrates his study on the "devastating power of emotion in human life",[75] a fact which evidently interested Racine.

The affect of such strong emotion is most obvious in the portrayal of Phaedra. She keeps herself "on a bed of sickness, worn down by distress". She has not eaten for three days and she wishes to keep herself from the light. The Nurse explains the origin of her distress: she declares "what ills we mortals suffer", while adding that "all of our human life is full of pain / and there is no rest from toil". This notion of human fallibility does not release Phaedra from her feelings of guilt. She believes that she is "wretched" and has "swerved aside from sanctity". Euripides also emphasises the possibility of the hereditary nature of sinfulness: even before Augustine it could be suggested that the sins committed by our ancestors could adversely affect our power for virtue. Thus Phaedra recognises that her "poor mother" had conceived a "terrible" love for the bull. This sinful lust has seemingly been passed to her daughter.

Theseus also recognises the possibility of hereditary sin when he states, "from some distant past there comes back against me a fate from the gods through the sins of some ancestor". In dying Hippolytus also recognises this transmission of sin and declares that "some blood-stained evil inherited from my ancient ancestors...has come against me". Euripides highlights the notion of human fallibility whilst suggesting that this sinful nature can be passed from generation to generation. It is perfectly feasible to believe that Racine has taken these themes from the Greek playwright rather than from his Jansenist masters.

The differences between the various adaptations of the Phaedra story have been well studied, particularly by Newton and Francis. However, whilst these studies have looked

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[74] Mary R. Lefkowitz, '"Impiety" and "Atheism" in Euripides' Dramas', in Judith Mossman (ed), *Oxford Readings in Classical Studies: Euripides*, Oxford, 2003, pp.102-121 (p.103)
[75] R.P. Winnington-Ingram, 'Hippolytus: A Study in Causation", in Judith Mossman (ed), *Oxford Readings in Classical Studies: Euripides*, pp.201-207 (p.203)

at the progression towards the Racinian adaptation of the myth, they have not highlighted how these earlier plays can be utilised to demonstrate the lack of any true religious statement in Racine's *Phèdre*. The first French adaptation, Garnier's *Hippolyte*, concentrates the action more on the eponymous character, rather than on the queen. Produced in 1573, this was one of the first adaptations of tragedies based on mythology which had appeared in France.[76] It was heavily based on Seneca's working of the myth but there are many changes allowing for an original version of the story. One of the greatest additions is the appearance of the ghost of Thésée's father. Appearing in Act One, Egée underlines the righteous actions of the gods. He states that "les dieux aiment justice, et poursuivent à mort / L'homme méchant, qui fait à un autre homme tort". Thus from the beginning of the play the audience is given the idea that what is to follow is just and right; the gods are punishing what they see as a sin.

Garnier highlights the concept of Phèdre as a neglected wife who has suffered at the hands of an unfaithful husband.[77] In this way, she is rendered less culpable. She describes Thésée as "un espoux desloyal....Adultère sans cesse [qui] ne fait cas de moy" (II). She calls on the gods to save her from her current misery, exclaiming "Bons dieux, grands dieux, prenez pitié de moy!" (II). She is calling on the gods to help her, yet it is interesting that she does not ask them to end her sinful love for her stepson. Of all the characters in the play it is Phèdre who places the most reliance on the heavens to guide her in the right direction. She hopes that through them her situation will somehow improve. The only other character that has need to call on the heavens is Thésée, who calls on them to destroy Hippolyte. In the end Phèdre does accept partial responsibility for his death, but she also blames Thésée for his too hasty actions: she says, "O crédule Thésée, et par mon faux rapport / Fait coupable du sang de ce pauvre homme mort!" (V).

It is evident that Garnier has given his work a much more theological slant previous dramatists. He has utilised the concept of divine fatality to instil his work with "l'idée de prédestination qu'on trouve chez les calvinistes et chez les jansénistes".[78] He has removed the pagan figure of Aphrodite, leaving the ghost to set the scene for events to

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[76] Robert Garnier, *Two Tragedies: Hippolyte et Marc Antoine*, Christine M. Hill and Mary G. Morrison (eds), London, 1975, p.10
[77] Ibid, p.12
[78] Claude Francis, *Les métamorphoses de Phèdre dans la littérature française*, Québec, 1967, p.10

come. He has taken care to show that "la nature humaine est corrompue". In order to represent original sin in his work he "attribue tous les malheurs qui sont abattus et vont s'abattre sur la famille de Thésée à un seul crime: ce «badinage de Minos»".[79] Thésée is depicted as "un homme prédestiné à la mort éternelle, dont il a déjà connu un avant-goût par sa descente aux enfers".[80] In contrast, Hippolyte is one of the "élus", whilst Phèdre is a sinner who pleads to die rather than have to sin.[81] Indeed, for Francis, "on sent Garnier hésitant au bord d'un calvinisme rigoureux ou d'un jansénisme avant la lettre".[82] The idea of religion is much more important in this play than in Racine's.

The rivalry between Racine and his contemporary Pradon over their two plays on the Phaedra theme has been well documented. Racine's opponents wanted their own dramatist to produce a rival work, thus two days after the premier of Racine's play, Pradon's *Phèdre et Hippolyte* appeared at the Hôtel Guénégaud. The most obvious borrowing from Racine's work is the introduction of Aricie, who remains Hippolyte's love interest, although here she is also the confidante of Phèdre. Pradon refuses to acknowledge his debt and instead cites "les Tableaux de Philostrate comme son autorité".[83]

The concept of divine intervention is introduced into the play immediately. Hippolyte explains that he fears "les funestes messages" which he is receiving from the "ciel". He believes that he will suffer from "les menaces des dieux" (I. i). He has been at the temple where he insists that "jamais sacrifice / Ne s'est vu commencé sous un plus noir auspice". All the signs lead him to presume that something terrible is going to happen to him, whilst he asserts that Phèdre will be "le fatal instrument / De la haine des dieux et de leur châtiment" (I. i). Pradon takes care to inform the audience that the forthcoming events are in some ways inevitable: although Hippolyte knows that something awful will happen, he is powerless to stop it.

Pradon, like other French authors using this legend, has rendered Phèdre the fiancée of Theseus. By adhering to the *bienséances*, Pradon has diminished the sin committed by

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[79] Claude Francis, *Les métamorphoses de Phèdre dans la littérature française*, p.12
[80] Ibid, p.13
[81] Ibid, pp.18-19
[82] Ibid, p.254
[83] Winifred Newton, *Le thème de Phèdre et d'Hippolyte dans la littérature française*, p.86

the lustful queen, whilst Hippolyte is rendered less perfect through his love for Aricie. It is because of this passion that he has abandoned "la chasse". This pastime used to give him "les plaisirs les plus doux", but he has renounced them in favour of his lover. In addition he is jealous of the success of his father and feels that he too must attain such renown in order to merit Aricie. He feels that he must depart, both to seek fame, and to avoid the actions of the gods (I. ii).

It is Thésée's absence that Phèdre utilises as an excuse for her growing passion for his son: she feels that his neglect is in some way responsible for her immoral love. Phèdre insists that Thésée is "infidèle" and that she should "le haïr". However she does not blame the gods for her feelings: they "n'allument point de feux illégitimes" since they would be "criminels en inspirant les crimes". She is altogether less tortured than her predecessors, although she does recognise that her lustful desire is not morally right. She asserts that her soul is "mal propre à soutenir l'horreur / De ce crime", yet she feels that she is powerless to act and abandons herself "aux ordres du destin". She may not think that the gods could inspire such a love but she believes that it is "le destin" which has caused her to love Hippolyte (I. iii). Unlike the Racinian Phèdre, there is no sense that the queen is utilising the gods as an excuse for her actions.

In contrast to other adaptations of the legend, the familiarity which exists between Phèdre and Aricie allows Hippolyte to be aware of the queen's passion for him without her actually declaring it to him. Phèdre sees that he now "hait la solitude", and she takes this as an indication of his supposed love for her (II. iii). Aricie cannot disabuse her of this belief, since she fears what the queen will do if she learns the truth. Unlike other playwrights, Pradon does not force his character to declare her love for Hippolyte before the return of Thésée; rather it is the return of the King which precipitates her declarations. She condemns the "injuste ciel" for this blow to her plans and asserts that heaven has done this "pour punir [son] amour et [ses] crimes" (II. v). Phèdre's declarations lead the audience to believe that Thésée is responsible for these events. He deserves this because he has been absent so often.

Thésée has a much more favourable view of the gods than Phèdre and he declares that it is they who "avec plus de justice" have brought him home and returned to him "l'objet d'une si tendre amour". Yet the object of his love does not welcome him. Instead she

threatens that her brother will arrive shortly to avenge his family for Thésée's sins. The King declares that the gods are threatening him with "un péril domestique"; he is afraid when he remembers "un oracle fatal, / Qui menace mon cœur d'un trop heureux rival" (III ii). He falsely believes that this rival is Hippolyte and that the signs of love are evident in his son.

Phèdre finally realises the truth about Aricie and decides that she will denounce Hippolyte. Thésée believes that he has seen the proof of his son's crime when he catches him on his knees begging Phèdre to rethink her accusations. Thésée commands Neptune to revenge this betrayal. Yet, when he realises the truth, he does not accept the blame for his son's death, but rather declares that the gods have deceived him "dans ce funeste jour" (V. iii). The last line of the play has him declaring, "c'en est trop, dieux cruels! Vous êtes obéis" (V. v). However it is not the gods who are guilty; each character should be blamed for his fate. In many ways the depiction of humanity in Pradon's play is much bleaker than in *Phèdre*. At least in the latter play, Thésée's reconciliation with Aricie leads to hope for the future, something which is absent here.

Thus it is evident that the themes that many critics have seen as evidence of Racine's Jansenist tendencies within *Phèdre* have much more prominent roles in works of authors whose outlook could never be considered to be Jansenist. Indeed Picard has noted that if it is necessary to underline the Jansenism inherent in Racine's *Phèdre*, then would be necessary to speak of the "jansénisme de Sophocle, chez qui l'écrasement de l'homme dans sa grandeur et sa misère n'est pas moins évident".[84] When the work is considered in the light of similar works on the same theme, it becomes evident that Racine's work is not any more religious than any of the others. All of them discuss the nature of free will and the affects of the gods because these are themes which are inherent in the legend. It is evident that he is interested in such topics, but this could have been due to the prevalence of such debates at the time rather than due to any desire to depict Jansenist beliefs in his work.

Despite Racine's withdrawal from the theatre after the production of *Phèdre*, his interest in drama had evidently not been erased. His two subsequent plays, written at the request

[84] Raymond Picard, *La carrière de Jean Racine*, p.307

of Mme de Maintenon, are quite different from what had gone before. It is these two plays which purportedly demonstrate Racine's true Jansenist sensibilities. Indeed, for Sellier they demonstrate that "la conversion de la tragédie racinienne est achevée".[85] Goldmann has stated that the two plays are not tragedies, but rather "des pièces du *Dieu présent et manifeste*".[86] No longer is God hidden. However, to say that these works are particularly Jansenist because they depict biblical stories is evidently too facile an interpretation. Of course it is easier to say that a play based on a religious source is more theological in tone than one based on ancient mythology. It is also difficult to ascertain whether the subject matter of these plays was Racine's own idea or whether it was suggested to him by his patrons.

Caldicott has explained that Orcibal's influence over French literary criticism is so great that "the received historical view has been that *Esther* is Jansenist inspired and *Athalie* a Jacobite play".[87] However this view is not accepted by all critics. Picard has stated that these last two works are more sombre than Racine's earlier works because the tone at court had changed, and the dramatist was merely fitting in with this tendency. He still cared for his reputation and his personal glory "avec une attention jalouse"; in fact "il montre même parfois une susceptibilité d'amour-propre et une vanité bien peu chrétienne".[88] He was evidently more concerned for his reputation at court than for his spiritual well-being. The fact that he took the commission at all suggests that his interest in the theatre remained vivid.

Racine's first Biblical play is based on the Old Testament book of Esther, which depicts the plight of the Jewish people in a hostile land. Goldmann has noted that whilst the play was the first to be truly admired by Arnauld, *Esther* is "sa pièce la moins janséniste".[89] Indeed the subject matter is rendered partially surprising by the fact that the morality of the original story has been brought into question. The Church Fathers rarely refer to the book,[90] thus suggesting that they had little interest in the events or morals depicted there, whilst it is the only book from the Hebrew Bible which is not

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[85] Philippe Sellier, *Augustinisme et la littérature II*, p.228
[86] Lucien Goldmann, *Le Dieu caché*, p.440
[87] Edric Caldicott, 'Racine's "Jacobite" Plays: The Politics of the Bible', in Edric Caldicott and Derval Conroy (eds), *Racine: The Power and the Pleasure*, Dublin, 2001, pp.100-120 (p.101)
[88] Raymond Picard, *La carrière de Jean Racine*, p.309
[89] Lucien Goldmann, *Le Dieu caché*, p.383
[90] Carey A. Moore (ed), *Studies in the Book of Esther*, New York, 1982, p.xxv

represented in the Dead Sea Scrolls.[91] Luther, a noted anti-Semite, declared "I am so hostile to this book and to Esther that I wish they did not exist at all, for they Judaize too much, and have much heathen impropriety".[92] It has also been suggested that since it was not written as "an ethical treatise" its morality is not specifically outspoken, but is "implied at best". The characters involved are ambiguous and their motives are open to interpretation.[93] Esther's behaviour could be classed as deceptive, whilst her conduct could be described as "inaction".[94] At first she seems unwilling to risk her life, or even her favoured position, in order to speak up for her uncle or her people.[95] In fact the extent to which this could be considered a religious work is debatable. Berg views it as essentially a "court tale" concerned with "the concept of kingship"[96]; it may be this fact which attracted Racine to the story rather than its biblical origins.

Despite the various objections to the Biblical source for the play, and the latent expression of Judaism as a superior religion inherent in the book of Esther, many critics see the work as an apology for the Jansenists. Orcibal is particularly vociferous in his defence of this idea: he states that the work could be seen as "une pièce à clés".[97] Arnauld was supposedly so impressed with the play in general that he had only "des éloges pour la beauté littéraire et la valeur édifiante de la pièce".[98] Orcibal also argues that Saint Augustine believed that nothing else in the Bible seemed to "mieux illustrer la toute-puissance de la grâce que l'incompréhensible changement opéré soudain dans l'âme d'Assuérus".[99]

However even Orcibal acknowledges that the portrayal of the Esther story by the young pupils at Saint-Cyr was not entirely appropriate from the standpoint of Jansenist doctrine. He states that Arnauld would probably have disapproved of "l'imprudence avec laquelle des petites filles étaient données en spectacle à toute la Cour." Furthermore Quesnel "craignait surtout que «l'exemple de cette maison ne porte

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[91] Sandra Beth Berg, *The Book of Esther: Motifs, Themes and Structure*, Missoula, 1979, p.1
[92] Timothy K. Beal, *The Book of Hiding: Gender, Ethnicity, Annihilation and Esther*, London, 1997, p.6
[93] Charles D. Harvey, *Finding Morality in the Diaspora? Moral Ambiguity and Transformed Morality in the Books of Esther*, Berlin, 2003, p.19
[94] Ibid, p.22
[95] Ibid, p.28
[96] Sandra Beth Berg, *The Book of Esther*, p.59
[97] Jean Orcibal, *La Genèse d'Esther et d'Athalie*, p.20
[98] Ibid, p.45
[99] Ibid, p.90

l'amour de la comédie dans tous les monastères qui prennent des pensionnaires»". He also apparently feared that the nuns themselves may possibly "[monter] sur le théâtre".[100]

It has also been argued that Racine was prompted to write this play after Arnauld's 1687 work, *L'Innocence opprimée par la calomnie, ou L'Histoire de la congrégation des filles de l'enfance de N.S.J.C*, was published condemning the closure of a convent in Toulouse in the previous year. However there are various arguments which suggest that such an event was unlikely to have influenced Racine into writing his play. Caldicott has rightly noted that to plead for the Jansenist cause via the medium of the theatre would have been "tactless".[101] In addition none of Racine's contemporaries appears to have understood *Esther* in this way. Even Arnauld and Quesnel, who mentioned the work on various occasions, did not see the work as a representation of their movement.[102]

In the preface to the play Racine explains the usefulness of his composition for pupils: those who can sing should be given further lessons in order that they can develop a talent "qui les peut amuser innocemment, et qu'elles peuvent employer un jour à chanter les louanges de Dieu".[103] It is for such young women that he has been asked to write a play "sur quelque sujet de piété et de morale". He believes that it is particularly appropriate because it is a story which is full of "de grandes leçons d'amour de Dieu, et de détachement du monde au milieu du monde même".[104] However when the play itself is studied, it becomes clear that these are far from being the predominant themes. Racine is evidently being diplomatic in this assertion, most probably in order to justify Madame de Maintenon's request that he should write a play for schoolgirls.

The opening scenes of *Esther* demonstrate the pitiable nature of the Jewish people, whose current state contrasts greatly with its former glory. A member of the Chorus asks, "déplorable Sion, qu'as-tu fait de ta gloire? / Tout l'univers admirait ta splendeur"; now the Jews have only a "triste mémoire" of their past (I. ii). Racine does not attribute

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[100] Jean Orcibal, *La Genèse d'Esther et d'Athalie*, p.45
[101] Edric Caldicott, 'Racine's "Jacobite" Plays: The Politics of the Bible', p.109
[102] Raymond Picard, *La carrière de Jean Racine*, pp.409-410
[103] Jean Racine, *Œuvres complètes*, p.945
[104] Ibid, p.946

this decrepit state to the doctrine of fallen man. He does not suggest that the Jewish people had committed any particular sin to deserve this fate, and when Mardochée informs Esther that the Jewish race is to be exterminated, she asks if God "qui vois former des desseins si funestes" has abandoned them. Although Mardochée suggests that certain events can be a sign that "Dieu parle", neither character makes any immediate reference to the status of the Jews as God's chosen people, or to the fact that they have obviously fallen away from His grace, even temporarily (I. iii).

However Mardochée does highlight the fact that Esther is in a privileged position as queen, particularly since her husband does not realise her ethnic origins. Thus he declares that she is "choisie", and is undoubtedly the instrument by which God will confound Aman. By not wanting to help her people, Esther will be refusing "cette grâce" without which she will perish (I. iii). It is only after these exchanges that Racine brings in the explanation for the current state of the Jews: they have worshipped other gods and have "violé" God's law (I. iv). He obviously does not want to overemphasise the fact that this is a chosen people, from whom God has temporarily withdrawn his favour. Since this is the case, it is unlikely that he saw the position of the Jews as a metaphor for the Jansenist movement.

In fact Racine has been more concerned with introducing the characters of Esther and Mardochée; characterisation is obviously more important to him than depicting any one individual doctrine. It has to be noted, however, that in the fifth scene of the first act, he does have a member of the Chorus explain, "nos pères ont péché, nos pères ne sont plus, / Et nous portons la peine de leurs crimes" (I. v). They may be suffering for the sins of their forefathers, but it is equally true that they do not seem too repentant now. If Racine had really wished to portray the necessity of God's grace for any action, then he would probably have been more at pains to make his characters more repentant.

However sinful the Jews may have been, they are nothing when compared with Aman. He is so full of pride that he believes that he is indestructible: he states, "Un homme tel qu'Aman, lorsqu'on l'ose irriter, / Dans sa juste fureur ne peut trop éclater" (II. i). He feels insulted by the presence of Mardochée and because his influence over the King is so great, he decides to advise him that the Jewish race should be wiped out. However he has underestimated Esther's own influence over her husband: Assuérus declares that she

has "je ne sais quelle grâce" which will always charm him (II. vii). Whilst Esther is undoubtedly pious – she recognises God as the "maître absolu de la terre et des cieux" (III. iv) – it is interesting that she still feels the need to utilise her human powers in order to influence her husband. In fact it appears that it is Mardochée who is much more concerned with the plight of his people. Without his determination, Esther may not have acted. If anything it is he who is more touched by his belief in God and His inherent power. Esther emphasises her own ignorance when she declares, "O Dieu, par quelle route inconnue aux mortels / Ta sagesse conduit ses desseins éternels" (III. vi). She was ignorant of His ability to save His people.

It is important that it is difficult to find any real hero or heroine in *Esther*. The protagonist herself has concealed her lineage from her husband and the court is unaware of her relationship to Mardochée. She uses her beauty and standing with the King to change his mind with regard to her people. She does not seem to want to act; she is not inspired by any divine grace to save the Israelites. She acts because Mardochée explains to her the necessity of doing so. It is he who trusts in the power of God, in His righteousness. In addition the revenge taken on Aman at the end of the play does seem particularly harsh: Racine does not preach forgiveness of one's enemies. In some ways this acts as a precursor to the events of *Athalie*, where there is no mercy for those who go against God's wishes.

Of course there are religious elements within the play: the Israelites are persecuted for their beliefs and they are eventually saved by a just monarch who, in the past, has been poorly advised. However it would be wrong to view this as any form of apology for the Jansenists. The religious elements within the play are certainly not overemphasised. Those who may wish to see Assuérus as the literary equivalent of Louis XIV, and the Israelites as symbolic of the Jansenists, should remember that the play was written at the request of the King's wife. Louis's opposition to the Jansenists never weakened. It seems unlikely that Racine, as a courtier, would wish to write a play glorifying a group whom his patron despised.

Racine's play was not the first on the subject of the Book of Esther; there was already a French precedent for his work. Pierre Du Ryer composed his version in 1642, and although it received little success at the time, it was translated into Dutch in 1659 and

reprinted five times.[105] In fact there had been nine theatrical versions of the story in France before Racine's, the first being Rivaudeau's *Amman*, which was produced in 1566. Of all these works, Du Ryer's play is supposedly "la mieux construite et la plus jouable"; it has also been suggested that the play may have influenced Racine.[106] Du Ryer concentrates on the political aspect of the story and focuses the action on the characters themselves rather than on the power of God.[107]

From the beginning of the work Esther is wary of the power which she is receiving through her position as queen. She believes that "cette grandeur est toujours infidelle", and it is only "en tremblant" that she can approach her new position in society (I. i). However Mardochée recognises that the favour which Esther receives is a gift from God. He explains to her that "c'est offenser le ciel et violer ses lois / Que d'être indifférente aux faveurs des grands rois" (I. ii). Indeed, he places great emphasis on the power of Heaven, stating that "Le ciel ne fait rien vainement" (I. ii). Thus he aims to counteract "l'infortune des Juifs". Esther has been given a position of power in order to aid them in "leurs douleurs et leurs craintes". It is "pour un bien que cette grâce éclate" (IV. i).

The notion of the Jews as a people set aside from the rest of humanity, either because they are the chosen ones or because they are reviled, is evident throughout the work. Esther explains that they are a "peuple odieux au Roi" (I. ii), whilst Haman describes them as "des peuples suspects" and "des objets de haine". He particularly despises Mardochée, who he depicts as "insolent" and "audacieux" (I. iii). He wishes to purge the state of these Jews. However he is depicted as false; he is a man who always acts in his own interests. Thus when Vashti, a character almost absent from Racine's play, arrives she describes how he used to place her "au nombre de ses dieux"; now he flees her sight. He was only supportive towards her when she had power (II. i). Yet the true power lies with the King, who is shown to be proud of this stature. He states that "bien souvent les rois sont maîtres du destin", adding that "un roi, comme les dieux, fait de rien toutes choses" (II. iii). In many ways this kingly pride is false: the monarch claims to be all-powerful and the creator of destinies, yet he will be led by his wife who

[105] Pierre Du Ryer, *Esther, Edition critique, introduction et annotation par Perry Gethner, Texte établi par Edmund J. Campion*, Exeter, 1982, p.v
[106] Ibid, p.x
[107] Ibid, p.xii

originates from the very people he has promised to destroy. His glory is in some part diminished by the influence of a beautiful woman.

It is thus interesting that the themes of false pride and the unreliability of human relationships are emphasised in what is a mostly unreligious play. The power held by the King is shown to be open to persuasion, and therefore not quite as strong as we may at first believe. This is to be contrasted with the power given to Esther by God; she has the power to get what she wants for her people. The Jews have been chosen by God and they will succeed against all odds. Furthermore Haman's plans are shown to be futile: he is false in all his dealings with others and thus he cannot succeed in his plan. The power of Heaven is too much for him and his plans of Jewish annihilation. This power is emphasised through the last lines of the play, when Mardochée declares, "O ciel! C'est de toi seul que ce bien va descendre, /Et ce n'est qu'à toi seul que nous devons le rendre" (V. v).

Although Du Ryer's play is not considered to be religious, it has many of the same themes as Racine's. In fact it is apparent that Racine's work is no more concerned with specifically religious values than was Du Ryer's. Both men are careful to depict the human failings which are inherent within the story: false pride, greed, the desire for power. Whilst these themes can be viewed in a religious light, they are also important in any secular world-view. Just because they are present in Racine's work does not necessarily mean that it is essential to see his work as a Jansenist apology.

Racine's second play written for the girls at Saint-Cyr was based on the biblical story of Athalia as told in II Kings and II Chronicles, and is particularly brutal. Racine does not keep wholly to the biblical version, in that he explains what has happened in the seven years since the murder of Athalie's son, something the Bible does not do.[108] This is important since the world Racine describes is "caught in a stagnant present, full of moral ambiguity"; according to Delehanty, this is what happens when there is no divine presence in society.[109]

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[108] Ann T. Delehanty, 'God's Hand in History: Racine's *Athalie* as the End of Salvation Historiography', *Papers on French Seventeenth-Century Literature*, 54 (2001), pp.155-166 (p.156)
[109] Ann T. Delehanty, 'God's Hand in History: Racine's *Athalie* as the End of Salvation Historiography', p.156

Several critics have highlighted the essentially religious nature of the work. God is seen to control all the action and even Athalie's dream of her own death is seen as "the clearest example of how characters are remotely controlled by God".[110] However it should also be remembered that the dream was one of many dramatic tools utilised over the course of the seventeenth century.[111] Campbell notes that Racine's message should be taken as religious, since he devotes so much time in his preface to explaining "in some detail the Biblical framework of his play". In addition, there is a "constant and deliberate use of unambiguous religious language throughout the tragedy".[112]

However some critics have seen the work as an unpleasant play that "represents all that is worst in religion".[113] Some have felt pity for Athalie, and held Joad in contempt; for them, Providence is cruel and absurd.[114] The portrayal of God has also caused much debate, not least because He is seen as "unmerciful, obscure, inaccessible, a god of vengeance rather than justice".[115]

It seems inevitable that certain critics have viewed the work as portraying Racine's own religious views. Orcibal is insistent that *Athalie* was pleasing to the Jansenists, particularly Arnauld. He states that "le second drame biblique de Racine était pourtant la continuation du premier par son insistance sur le thème des mauvais conseillers".[116] Joas could be regarded as representing the young Racine, whilst the young Israelites "peuvent aisément faire penser aux petites pensionnaires ...à Port-Royal".[117] He also believes that Jansenius' ideas are evident in the work: it demonstrates the concept of efficacious grace, whilst "le poète y insiste...sur la nécessité d'un culte intérieur et de l'amour de Dieu qui seul peut rendre la paix aux cœurs inquiets".[118]

However when the work itself is studied, it becomes clear that such an interpretation is not as obvious as Orcibal suggests. In some ways the religious tone is stronger than in *Esther*, although this is only really provided by Joad. The themes present are similar to

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[110] John Campbell, 'The God of *Athalie*', *French Studies*, 43, number 4 (1989), pp.385-404 (p.387)
[111] Ibid, p.388
[112] Ibid, p.390
[113] Ibid, p.385
[114] Ibid
[115] A.J. Boyle, *Tragic Seneca: An essay in theatrical tradition*, London, 1997, p.190
[116] Jean Orcibal, *La Genèse d'Esther et d'Athalie*, p.48
[117] Ibid, p.49
[118] Jean Orcibal, *La Genèse d'Esther et d'Athalie*, pp.91-92

those provided in Racine's previous work: the importance of a just monarchy, revenge, retribution and the setting apart of the Jewish people. However, he immediately introduces the idea that God will be central to the events about to be portrayed: in the very first line Abner declares, "Oui, je viens dans son temple adorer l'Éternel". He has been celebrating "la fameuse journée, Où sur le mont Sina la loi nous fut donnée". This is important, since it is the fact that the Jews have not kept these laws that have led to their supposed abandonment by God.

Abner himself explains that they are forsaken, since "Dieu même...s'est retiré de nous". He sees the Jews as a "peuple abattu", and believes that God no longer listens to their prayers (I. i). Only Joad remains confident in His presence: he explains, "je crains Dieu...et n'ai d'autre crainte". He believes that the Israelites are a "peuple ingrat" who cannot see that there has never been another period of history "si fertile en miracles". The people are wrong when they imagine themselves to have been abandoned, because God "sait, quand il lui plaît, faire éclater sa gloire...son peuple est toujours présent à sa mémoire" (I. i).

However, it is Joad's unfailing faith which indirectly causes the play to open with such foreboding. Abner describes Athalie's hatred for "cette fermeté rare" and asks Joad, "pensez-vous être saint et juste impunément?" It is his "amour pour la religion" which has inspired "révolte et sédition" (I.i). It is tempting indeed to read these first few lines as an apology for Jansenism. The strictness of their piety brought criticism from others, as did their unfailing belief that what they thought was unquestionably correct. However, these few lines are hardly enough evidence for us to conclude that the play is Jansenist. This is emphasised by the fact that Athalie's hatred of Joad is made stronger by the fact that Josabet is "de [leur] dernier roi...la sœur" (I.i). Thus there are also earthly reasons why she should despise him.

Abner is not the only Israelite to believe that the race has been renounced by God; Josabet also doubts their status as His people. Joad denounces her fears: "Vos larmes, Josabet, n'ont rien de criminel; / Mais Dieu veut qu'on espère en son soin paternel" (I. ii). He is the only character who truly believes in the power of God. Athalie, on the other hand, falsely believes that her god will not abandon her. She refuses to have her

actions judged by "un peuple téméraire" and states, "le ciel même a pris soin de me justifier" (II. v). Her pride and self-belief will soon be shown to be false.

In Joad's eyes, it is Athalie's worship of a false god which should lead to her condemnation. Although the massacre of her descendents is obviously condemned, Racine does suggest that this is far from being her greatest fault. Joad denounces "les ennemis de Dieu" and declares that they should pronounce Joas to be king (I.ii). Whilst he sees the child's future as glorious – since he will supposedly lead a life serving God – Josabet despairs of the peril in which they will place him. Racine contrasts Joas's position as the saviour of the Jewish people with that of the heathen Athalie.

Once again, Joad is alone in his trust in God. He emphasises His just nature by explaining that He "protège l'innocence/Et dans la faiblesse éclater sa puissance". He punishes the wicked and the heathen with "le bras vengeur" (I.ii). Indeed, the God that Joad portrays is harsh and unforgiving; there is no emphasis of His forgiving or merciful nature. There is little in His portrayal to suggest the concept of God as found in the writings of Pascal, Arnauld, or Nicole, who all describe God's merciful response to sinful mankind. This is because Racine is not attempting to depict the Jansenist God – or the Jansenist movement in general – but is dramatising the view of God as provided in the Old Testament.

This view of God is underlined by the Chorus, who "[publient] ses bienfaits". They praise "sa gloire et sa puissance", and declare that "il fait naître et mûrir les fruits". Everything is within His power, and His law is "le plus riche don qu'il ait fait aux humains" (I.iv). It is this emphasis on divine law that again suggests Racine's preoccupation with the Old Testament God.

Racine contrasts Athalie's powerlessness to change her destiny with the rising power of Joas. Indeed his status as the chosen one is emphasised by Mathan, who comments that "cet enfant vient d'illustre origine" and is destined for "quelque grand projet" (III. iv). The child himself is clearly pious, since when Athalie attempts to tempt him away from his service in God's temple, he declares that "il faut craindre" his God since "lui seul est Dieu" (II. vii). This view has been instilled in him by Joad, who has destined him to reclaim the throne which is rightfully his. The priest explains to his charge, "Il faut que

vous soyez instruit, même avant tous, / Des grands desseins de Dieu sur son peuple et sur vous" (IV. ii). Joad believes that the child has been chosen by God; he has been saved for His own purposes. Even though the priest could save his own family by surrendering the child to Athalie, he will not do this because he trusts in God's power. Of course this trust is not misplaced, and Athalie's downfall is assured: she has defied the God of the Israelites and will therefore be punished. She herself recognises that she cannot escape her fate when she declares, "impitoyable Dieu, toi seul as tout conduit" (V. vi). Racine depicts a vengeful God who takes his revenge easily.

Athalie is vanquished, yet she does not feel herself to be culpable in any sense. Rohou has suggested that in some ways she is not: she was "née dans la mauvaise voie, sans avoir eu la liberté d'en sortir...moralement contrainte à la vengeance contre les Juifs et leur Dieu".[119] This is supposedly proof of Racine's Jansenist tendencies. If Racine were suggesting that she had been born to lead such a sinful life, then the audience would recognise the concept that sin is hereditary, passed from Adam to all subsequent generations. However this concept is practically absent from the work. Athalie commits her sins not because she is destined to do so, but because she is cruel. This means that her fate is deserved. It is only right that God should punish her, not only for her actions, but also for the fact that she has worshipped false idols.

It is interesting that the only character who is continually certain of God's power and care is Joad. In fact the final lines of the play are given over to him: he declares, "que les rois dans le ciel ont un juge sévère, / L'innocence un vengeur, et l'orphelin un père" (V. viii). Whilst in the earlier, secular, plays it was the weak characters who put their trust in some form of deity, in this ostensibly religious work, it is the strongest character who turns to his God. His protestations of divine power are not made in order to conceal his inner weakness; rather it is a sign of his strength that he can acknowledge his God when to do so is dangerous. However he is the only character who makes so much of the affects of divine power; the others are less certain that God will help them. Surely if Racine were attempting to portray a religious community which was analogous to that of Port-Royal then all the members of that community would have an equally strong faith.

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[119] Jean Rohou, *Jean Racine: entre sa carrière, son œuvre et son Dieu*, p.405

In addition, there is the problem of Joas's future as king. The Bible depicts him as a godly ruler, as long as Joad was alive, with one of his notable achievements being the reconstruction of Solomon's temple. However, once his aunt and uncle are dead he turns away from God and begins worshipping false idols. He murders his cousin, but is himself killed in a conspiracy. However, Racine makes no overt reference to future events, which suggest that they were not of an overriding importance to his plan for the work. Mathan does warn Athalie that there is "quelque monstre naissant" in the temple (II.vi), and although he is obviously speaking of Athalie's immediate fate, there is a hint of what will come in the future. Yet nothing further is made of this. As he could have done with *Phèdre*, Racine could have depicted Joas as a recipient of God's grace, which was later withdrawn. He does not choose to do this, so we must presume that his intention was not to portray the concept of grace as seen by the Jansenist movement.

Although Racine does depict an essentially theological work, this does not mean that *Athalie* should be considered particularly Jansenist. He never gives any evidence that he saw the work as an apology for his former masters. In a play with such religious themes we would expect to find "un débat sur les limites de la responsabilité de l'homme, sur l'emploi du libre arbitre", but in fact "le thème de la liberté individuelle a perdu sa fonction".[120] On one level, the story can be seen as depicting a ruler who "has disrupted the order of the law and sought to extend a usurped power".[121] The emphasis on law and the righteous ruler takes much from the Old Testament view of God, rather than relying on the Jansenist form of piety.

However it is only when other plays with a religious theme are studied that the true lack of any doctrinal statement by Racine in his works becomes evident. Despite the rift between the Church and the theatre, there were quite a few religious plays produced during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. This is surprising, particularly because it was not just members of the Catholic Church that objected to drama: many theologians in the reformed churches in the sixteenth centuries were also vehemently opposed to the theatre. As Marguerite Soulié has explained, they viewed theatrical productions as "des plaisirs mondains qui risquaient de dévoyer le peuple et qui gaspillaient l'argent qui aurait dû revenir aux pauvres". In France this opposition was particularly vocal and

[120] Éléonore M. Zimmermann, *La liberté et le destin dans le théâtre de Jean Racine*, p.138
[121] John Campbell, 'The God of *Athalie*', p.393

various church synods condemned the use of the Bible "dans les pièces où la fiction était mêlée à la vérité de la Parole".[122] Yet whilst some members of the reformed church denounced the theatre, others saw its potential for propaganda. Drama was a means by which the illiterate and ill-educated could be taught about the changes in religion which were taking place.[123]

It was by such means that one of the first French religious plays of this period came into being. Théodore de Bèze's 1550 play *Abraham sacrifiant* aimed to bring the doctrine of efficacious grace and the elect to the wider masses. A French protestant who had fled to Switzerland because of religious persecution, Bèze wrote the play in his first year of exile, aiming to explain God's will. He wished to give courage and fortitude to those who, like him, were suffering for their religion. Abraham was to be the shining example of the kind of faith necessary for Protestants.[124] The play was a huge success and remained popular amongst those in the reformed churches until the end of the sixteenth century, and was even translated into English in 1577.[125]

Unlike Racine's religious plays, the presence of God within Bèze's work is explicit: He is mentioned in almost every utterance made by almost every character. The audience can be left in no doubt as to the true meaning of the work. At the beginning of the play Bèze gives the chapter in Genesis on which his work is based, thus grounding what is to come in its Biblical context. Abraham is portrayed from the outset as a man chosen by God: he is one of the elect. God has taken him from his own country and provided for him in his time of need. He has had many trials to contend with, but does not care: "Voilà comment par les calamités / Tu fais connaître aux hommes tes bontés" (p.15). This idea that it is through bad that God creates good is also apparent in book eleven of Augustine's *De Civitate Dei*, where the reader is told that "God turns evil choices to good use".[126] Abraham praises God because He can make "tout de rien" and "sortir du mal le bien" (p.15). He calls on his wife Sara so that they can both recognise "les grands bienfaits de Dieu". In fact "l'homme pour vrai ne saurait faire mieux / Que de chanter

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[122] Théodore de Bèze, *Abraham sacrifiant*, ed Marguerite Soulié, Mugron, 1990, p.vii
[123] Ibid, p.vii
[124] J.S. Street, *French Sacred Drama from Bèze to Corneille: Dramatic forms and their purposes in the early modern theatre*, Cambridge, 1983, pp.21-25
[125] Théodore de Bèze, *Abraham sacrifiant*, p.xxii
[126] Saint Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*, translated by Henry Bettenson, London, 1984, p.449

du Seigneur l'excellence" (p.17). They have been chosen from an entire people and have been taken from "des lieux / Tout remplis de faux dieux" (p.19).

The glory and good of God are to be contrasted with the evil of the devil. Satan appears to act as the voice of temptation to Abraham. He believes that any father would rather disobey the word of God than sacrifice his own son. He represents all that is selfish and wrong in the world. Whilst God "règne...en son haut firmament" the devil states that "la terre est toute à moi". God may be adored in Heaven but the devil believes that he is "en la terre adoré" (p.21). He hopes that by refusing to sacrifice his son, a gift to the couple in their later years, Abraham will thereby choose selfish human love over the greater good of God.

This test is made all the more difficult because Abraham has been promised great things; his child was supposed to be the founder of a great nation. Even in this time of need he calls on God to help him: when told of the Lord's commandment he exclaims, "Donne-moi la vertu / D'accomplir ce commandement" (p.25). Thus Bèze underlines the idea that when tempted or unable to fulfil our duty, we should always ask for God's grace to complete what is asked of us. If we do this, we cannot fail. The troupe, a group of shepherds who make up the chorus in the work, proffer this concept by claiming that

> Pauvreté ni richesse
> N'empêche ni ne blesse
> D'un fidèle le cœur.
> Quoi qu'il soit tourmenté
> Et mille fois tenté
> Le fidèle est vainqueur (p.28).

Abraham recognises that if God commands the sacrifice "il faut obéir" (p.31). In fact whilst Bèze does make it obvious that his protagonist does not want to kill his son, he never really wavers from his intention of obeying the divine command. For him, anyone who dies following God "est heureux" (p.34).

Even Isaac, when he learns of the intended sacrifice, realises that God must be obeyed no matter what the consequences. He leaves his father with no doubt as to what he should do:

> Et toutefois, si vous faites cela
> Pour obéir au Seigneur, me voilà,
> Me voilà prêt, mon père, et aux genoux,
> Pour souffrir tout, et de Dieu, et de vous (p.55).

Whilst he does not want to die, he is willing to give his life to obey the will of God; all must be submitted to this higher will. He believes that he has not honoured the Lord enough during his short life, thus he asks for forgiveness. Even whilst giving his life for his God, he asserts his lack of virtue. Bèze thus emphasises that it is only with the grace of God that we can truly recognise our faults and ask for further help. Even Satan recognises this grace at work within Isaac: he declares, "jamais enfant mieux ne parla. / Je suis confus" (p.58).

It is evident that this play contrasts greatly with *Esther* and *Athalie*: Bèze's sole purpose is to glorify God and to highlight his own religious beliefs. Every event, and utterance, is directed towards this purpose, something which certainly cannot be said for these Racinian plays. The fact that Racine's works are based on events taken from the Bible seems almost coincidental to the story he is telling. He is clearly more interested in the dramatic affects within the stories than he is in their origins. He may present certain religious ideas, particularly in *Athalie*, but this is by no means his sole motivation. He has been affected by his religious background but not to the extent that it is the dominant force in any of his works.

Roston has suggested that Racine's religious plays were not performed on the professional stage during his lifetime "out of respect for the author's extreme religious views".[127] However he does not provide any evidence to support this assertion, so it is difficult to verify this belief. In addition it seems unlikely that Racine's religious sensibilities had overtaken him to such an extent: he was making corrections to his

[127] Murray Roston, *Biblical Drama in England From the Middle Ages to the Present Day*, London, 1968, p.112

earlier works throughout the period of his supposed renunciation of the theatre. Indeed it has even been suggested that as well as making corrections, he was even adding bits to his earlier dramatic compositions.[128] Picard has also highlighted the fact that the position of royal historiographer "fait partie de la littérature", and whilst he may not have been producing any new plays during this period, his elevated social position meant that his reputation was getting better and better.[129]

This is not to suggest that Racine was not touched in any way by religious ideas: he obviously was, or he would not have found so much power in the stories of *Esther* and *Athalie*. However he was not quite so indebted to Jansenism as some critics have tended to believe. Delcroix has commented that "il faut conclure par un paradoxe: l'influence janséniste sur Racine est indiscutable, mais elle est indéfinissable dans les pièces de sujet grec".[130] He asserts that "le dieu mythologique apparaît le plus souvent comme une métaphore de poète, expression magnifique de passions irrésistibles et mortelles".[131] In addition Goldmann has stated that

> Nothing but the combination of a whole cluster of special circumstances, and more particularly a man whose whole mental structure had been determined by Jansenism, but who had left Jansenism, lived in the world, and turned to literary activities, could have produced, out of the literary, secular transposition of the thought of Port-Royal, the miracle of Racinian tragedy.[132]

He also believes that "le caractère janséniste et tragique de son théâtre...constituait...une nécessité esthétique et peut-être morale", although this is not something that should have been evident to the public.[133] This seems a somewhat facile explanation of why the Jansenist form of piety is not more overt in Racine's works.

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[128] Jean Dubu, 'Artistic Reasons for Racine's Silence after *Phèdre*', in R.C. Knight (ed), *Racine: Modern Judgements*, London, 1969, pp.218-230 (p.218)
[129] Raymond Picard, *La carrière de Jean Racine*, p.340
[130] Maurice Delcroix, *Le sacré dans les tragédies profanes de Racine*, Paris, 1970, p.392
[131] Ibid, p.396
[132] Lucien Goldmann, 'The Structure of Racinian Tragedy', in R.C. Knight (ed), *Racine: Modern Judgements*, London, 1969, pp.101-116 (pp.109-110)
[133] Lucien Goldmann, *Le Dieu caché*, p.417

It does seem unlikely that Racine could have undergone the upbringing he did, and had the connections he did, without the doctrine of the Jansenists having some affect on him. This is most probably highlighted by his fascination with the themes of predestination and the nature of divine power. The fact that the Jansenist movement had underlined so solidly such doctrines meant that they became the subject of many literary discussions. However this does not mean that these actual doctrines spilled over into Racine's work. He was affected by these discussions enough to portray them in his plays, but not enough to utilise them in order to give preference to the Jansenist doctrine over any other religious belief.

CONCLUSION

Throughout this study, it has been shown that some critics have overstated what they see as the Jansenist influence on French literature produced during the seventeenth century. However, with the exception of Pascal, these secular authors were not motivated by the desire to praise or glorify God with their works. Their only purpose was to attract as wide an audience as possible; their desire was to entertain people. No other motivation seems to have alienated the Jansenist movement as much as this one. The desire to divert is wholly incompatible with the religious beliefs of this group.

Thus it has been demonstrated that, no matter what the genre, these authors were not moved to produce an overt defence of the Jansenist doctrinal position. French literature of this period was not overtly religious, even if it did portray ideas which were important to the Jansenist movement. French authors were affected by the religious ideas prevalent during this period in a subtle way. The debates taking place in the salons, and in society in general, were taken up by these authors, so that the themes rather than the actual doctrines were the most prominent aspect of the literature during this period. It is in this way that Mesnard's comment that such themes "ont profondément marqué l'anthropologie de la fin du XVIIe siècle"[1] can be justified. These discussions formed part of the French national consciousness; the idea of self-love became "un thème classique de la philosophie et de la théologie".[2]

Although discussions on certain themes have been attributed to the importance of the Jansenist movement during this period, it should not be forgotten that many of these ideas originated with other religious and philosophical groups. For example the concept of self-love has been important throughout history, largely thanks to Plato.[3] However it would be wrong to suggest that the Jansenist movement did not help to re-ignite these discussions. The group may not have been the first to assert the importance of doctrines such as predestination, self-love and the corrupt nature of man, but it certainly did a great deal to bring these discussions to the fore. It is in this sense that the Jansenist movement had an important influence on seventeenth-century French literature.

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[1] Jean Mesnard, *La Culture du XVIIe siècle: enquêtes et synthèse*, Paris, 1992, p.43
[2] Ibid, p.46
[3] Ibid, p.47

Of course the one exception to this conclusion is Pascal. Whilst he himself does not seem to have seen himself as a member of the Jansenist movement, his works certainly do portray a high level of sympathy with the group and its ideas as a whole. His works depict many aspects of Jansenist doctrine, whilst it is difficult to believe that he would have conceived of the idea of the *Pensées* if it were not for his association with Jansenist figures. Why should it be that he seems to have appreciated the need for a more austere form of piety, when other writers of the period did not? Evidently this could partially be explained by his own personal temperament; he may have been more susceptible to this particular form of piety. It could be argued that his continued illness meant that he was more open to these doctrines than an author such as Racine, who had a vigorous career at court. However this cannot be entirely true; after all, La Rochefoucauld also suffered from health problems, and he probably suffered more in terms of human relationships than Pascal, yet he does not seem to have been so greatly attracted by the Jansenist movement. Disappointment in life was clearly not a prerequisite for a Jansenist sympathiser. There must be some other reason that can explain why Pascal seems to have the greatest affinity with the group, whereas other authors were satisfied to portray general ideas which were discussed by the whole of society.

At least some of the reason for Pascal's attraction to the polemic of the moment was the timing of his conversion. The *Nuit de feu* in 1654 coincided with an increase in the condemnations of Jansenius and his work. Following the publication of the *Augustinus*, Saint-Cyran was unable to defend his friend and followers and was thus unable to unite the movement in a common cause. This was not possible until the advent of Antoine Arnauld, whose writings gave the Jansenists their first statements of belief as a group. His defence of Jansenius, along with the general doctrine of the movement, meant that by the time of Pascal's conversion, the group was known much more widely than before. The movement was under continued fire for its support of Jansenius, a man with whom Pascal evidently sympathised. In fact this was one of the most volatile periods for this group, since in 1653 the papal bull *Cum Occasione* was published, which contained papal condemnation of the five propositions for the first time. Pascal was obviously drawn to these discussions not only by his sympathy for these doctrines, but also by his evident love of polemic. Throughout his remaining years he produced works which argued his position; he wanted to persuade others to agree with his beliefs.

Although the condemnation of the Jansenist movement continued for over a century after this point, the group never needed a strong advocate as much as it had done during the 1650s. The tone of literature was beginning to shift and the public was evidently tiring of the distinctly sermonising works which had been prevalent in the past. This was why the *solitaires* were not moved by Arnauld's planned defence during the Sorbonne's consideration of his position, but agreed instead to the publication of Pascal's letters. It is interesting that no Jansenist was able to defend his own spiritual leader properly. This fell to a man who may have had sympathy with Jansenist beliefs, but was certainly not a member of the group himself. Whilst the movement suffered continued condemnation later on, it was helpful that a figure such as Pascal had, in the past, been associated with it. His contribution was unique because it came at a time when the Jansenist form of piety was not particularly well known and was certainly not really popular. This was never true again at any subsequent point over the following century.

Pascal's association with the group also came about when the Jansenist movement can be seen to have been at its purest. There was no outside influence, such as that of Descartes, which was to affect the group in later years. Nor were its concerns affected by new members, who were more interested in changing the status quo, as was the case by the middle of the eighteenth century. At this point, the sole concern of the movement was to defend the principles of piety as set out by Jansenius over a decade earlier. Obviously this was to change: once the defence of the *Augustinus* had reached a point where the discussions could go no further, many Jansenists began to turn their attention to other matters. Thus Arnauld and Nicole both began to write treatises which were not wholly concerned with those discussions on piety which had been important up until that point. It is debatable whether Arnauld, and certainly Nicole, can be considered to be Jansenists in the early sense of the name. Figures such as Mère Angélique, and the more strict members who made up the early Jansenist movement, would have been unlikely to approve of the composition of works which were not intended to help the faithful in their search for God. This is certainly not the objective of the *Logique* and the *Traité de la comédie*, even if these works did bring in religious discussions when others probably would not have done so. In some ways Arnauld and Nicole were committing the very crime for which they reproached men such as Racine.

In a similar way, the literature of seventeenth-century France was also changing. Whilst the earlier decades of the century had been epitomised by discussions on the best way to write drama, or how the heroic themes of the age could be best displayed, this had all changed by the 1650s. After the *Frondes*, there was a definite shift in literary tone. From this point, authors began to depict more serious subjects, no doubt because they had been influenced by the discussions which had been brought to the fore by the religious debate of the period. Many works showed the fallibility of man, rather than his heroic side, as had been the trend in the past. This should not be explained by the fact that the authors of the time were so moved by the Jansenist doctrines which were being discussed that they felt the need to portray them in their works. Instead, it is the fact that these discussions were happening at all that is important. The Catholic Church as a whole was becoming more austere during this period, again partially thanks to the influence of the Jansenist form of piety. It is the sum of all these factors that affected the literature being produced then: Jansenism was only a partial influence.

Although it is generally accepted that the Jansenist movement abhorred literature when its purpose was not to glorify God, there is only really Nicole who felt moved to write against it. This is probably because the earlier Jansenists felt that to compose such a treatise would be interfering with worldly affairs, when it is only devotion to God that mattered. The very fact that Nicole did not concur with this concept demonstrates the fact that, by the 1670s, the movement had changed sufficiently to allow him to produce such a work. In fact, it could also be argued that it is this change in emphasis within the movement which meant that there was no repetition of a work such as Pascal's during the seventeenth century.

Although the timing of Pascal's conversion was vital for the development of both his own beliefs and the progress of Jansenism in terms of popularity, the same cannot be said for the other authors in this study. La Rochefoucauld's *Maximes* were first published in the 1660s, a period which was turbulent for the Jansenists. He is the author who is the closest in terms of time to Pascal, but there was enough of a gap between the two authors to change the movement's emphasis. Although the duc may display many similar criticisms of man's corrupt and selfish nature, he does not do so with any overt reference to God. He was evidently influenced by the pessimistic views that were prevalent at this time, but he does not use this to compose a defence, or restatement, of

Jansenist doctrine. By this point, the movement had altered in many respects. The discussions on Jansenius had ceased: his followers no longer felt that it was necessary to defend his works. Instead it was these followers who needed some form of help. By the middle of the 1660s the Petites Ecoles had been closed definitively and twelve nuns had been removed from Port-Royal after refusing to sign the formulary. The doctrinal defence which had been necessary a decade earlier was no longer needed; it had already been achieved by Arnauld and Pascal. Instead it was the nuns – figures who could not defend themselves – that needed the help. La Rochefoucauld felt no compulsion to respond to this need.

La Rochefoucauld also had an important influence on his friend, Madame de Lafayette. Some of her works were apparently written with his help; they were certainly the product of the salons attended by the duc and Jansenists such as Jacques Esprit. It was therefore inevitable that she would be influenced by La Rochefoucauld's own cynical view of man; she also seems to have been deeply affected by his pessimistic view of love. Yet why should her pessimistic tone necessitate a Jansenist reading? In fact she was more affected by La Rochefoucauld's personal beliefs than by Jansenist doctrine; his influence was greater than Jacques Esprit's. Her condemnation of man is nowhere near as vicious as the Jansenist's. She does not overtly moralise over the actions of her characters, nor does she suggest that they would have been any better off had they led a more pious or austere life. Like La Rochefoucauld, she was evidently influenced by the ideas that were being debated in the salon, but not to such an extent that she became a Jansenist herself.

The salon of Madame de Sablé played an important role in the dissemination of these ideas. In 1645 she had decided to have her own house built opposite the convent of Port-Royal, in order that she could be close to the instigators of her new-found piety. Although some critics would lay emphasis on the important role that this salon played in the bringing together of Jansenist figures and some of the great authors of the time, this idea should be treated with caution. Firstly Madame de Sablé can hardly be considered as a Jansenist herself. Dorothy Backer has suggested that such women were drawn to the Jansenist form of piety precisely because it was so exacting and would set them apart from their contemporaries. She notes that "it is one of the painful paradoxes

of the spiritual life that extreme humility can also be a disguised form of pride".[4] She has also noted that in Mme de Sablé's case, the removal to the confines of Port-Royal was actually motivated by her failing financial situation. It has also been suggested that, towards the end of her life, her Jansenist faith began to falter, as she lost patience with the more intransigent members of the group.[5] Thus, just because an author was linked to this salon, it does not automatically follow that he should be considered as a true member of the Jansenist movement.

In addition *La Princesse de Clèves* appeared at a time when there was a major shift in Jansenism. The group was becoming more widespread and was more popular than it had been in the past. Figures such as Arnauld and Nicole were introducing new facets to the movement through their participation in arguments that were not necessarily doctrinal in basis. In the past the Jansenists had based their discussion – and certainly their written works – on the pursuit of God and a more austere form of piety. This was not necessarily always the case during this later period, something that was probably helped along by the greater freedom enjoyed by the movement during the *Paix de l'Eglise*. There was certainly less need for any overt defence of the movement at this time than in the past. Madame de Lafayette was following in a newly established tradition by simply picking up on the types of discussions that were prevalent in the society around her.

The description of Racine's works formed the concluding part of this study and it is important that it should do so. Racine is the author who, with the exception of Pascal, had the greatest links with the Jansenists. Above all other Jansenist beliefs he seems to have been attracted by the concepts of predestination and free will. What is important is that he takes these ideas and then turns them around: he uses them to reinforce the fallibility of man, since the characters prove themselves unable to accept their own responsibility in the events which surround them. His particular education enabled him to use these themes in a much more in-depth way than his predecessors. It is somewhat ironic that it was the Jansenists' teachings that enabled him to write such popular plays. Although he may have made his peace with the movement in later life, there does not seem to be any evidence that he followed their teachings to the letter. The development

[4] Dorothy Anne Liot Backer, *Precious Women*, New York, 1974, p.231
[5] Ibid, p.232

of the Jansenist movement towards the end of the seventeenth century probably facilitated his reconciliation with the group. It is difficult to believe that the earlier Jansenist figures, who seem to have been much more intransigent in their beliefs, would have accepted him back into their movement after his continued interest in the theatre, and particularly after his denunciations of Nicole.

The development of the Jansenist movement over the seventeenth century corresponded with an important development in the literature of the period. It can be seen that after Pascal there was no one figure who attempted to defend the group overtly, nor did they attempt to define its doctrine. Therefore, it cannot be argued that Jansenism specifically caused this development of literature. However, when taken in a more abstract sense – in other words, when viewed in terms of themes rather than in terms of specific individual doctrines – Jansenist beliefs did become more evident between the work of La Rochefoucauld and that of Racine. The former concentrates his ideas on what motivates man to do what he does: he takes the Jansenist view of *amour-propre* and secularises it to fit his own purposes. Madame de Lafayette develops this view so that she also employs this cynical view of human motivation, whilst adding the concepts of the evils of society as opposed to the benefits of withdrawal and self-contemplation; the falseness of human relationships; and the inability of anyone to tell the truth. Of course Racine also uses these themes, but he also adds much more. He develops the concepts of free will and predestination and employs them in order to bring new perspectives on classical plays. In this way, Jansenism contributed an important part to his genius.

Ironically the popularisation of Jansenist beliefs and their dispersal in literature were partially the fault of figures such as Arnauld and Nicole. They had changed the face of the movement a great deal by their departure from the strict nature of the early movement. Their participation in secular debates, along with their own works restating the Jansenists' core beliefs, meant that more and more of society knew of the movement and the debates which surrounded it. In fact this inadvertently meant that Nicole had to write his treatise condemning literature, even though he had actually helped to popularise Jansenism. It is ironic that the way that the movement became more widespread led to this denunciation; there was an inverse reaction to Arnauld and Nicole's moves which was both unforeseen and unwanted. Without Nicole, a treatise on the theatre would have been both unnecessary and improbable. Earlier figures would

probably not have popularised the movement to this extent and they would certainly not have been motivated to write a work which would involve them so deeply in secular discussions, no matter how much they impinged on Jansenist beliefs.

In conclusion, it is evident that the Jansenist doctrine and the secular literature of the seventeenth century were not wholly compatible in terms of specific doctrine. The fact that the movement condemned literature that did not have the aim of glorifying God meant that Jansenist doctrine could never be fully and overtly depicted in secular writings. However it was wholly possible, and probably inevitable, that the general ideas surrounding the movement would be taken up by the most important authors of the period. This is nowhere truer than in Racine's work. His unique position as someone educated in this tradition, when coupled with his talent for adapting classical stories for his time, ensured the continued success of his work.

It would be particularly interesting to study how these concurrent developments in literature and Jansenist doctrine developed during the eighteenth century, particularly with massive changes that occurred after *Unigenitus*. Later works such as *Manon Lescaut* have been highlighted as portraying the Jansenist viewpoint; it would be interesting to see how these debates had developed since the seventeenth century. Further research would be necessary in this area because the Jansenism of the eighteenth century has often been neglected by critics. It would certainly be fascinating to see how these literary works produced during this later century compared with their earlier counterparts.

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